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THE REALM OF GOD

THE REALM OF GOD

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TO THE MEMORY

OF

MY MOTHER

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE first five chapters of this book are the background against which the meaning of its second and more practical half stands in clearer relief.

My object in writing these pages has been to endeavour to set forth the conception of the Kingdom of God, which lies at the heart of the Christian Religion—to set it forth in such a way that it would appear not simply as a spacious idea, but as a sublime cause of God challenging us to establish its sovereignty in the modern world. Therefore all through the necessary discussions of its original meaning and its historical development I have striven not to lose sight of it as the shining goal of our bewildered and yet wonderful age.

May I therefore express the hope that those who would naturally be more interested in the second part of the book will hold on their way through its earlier chapters, for the sake of the very much deeper significance that they impart to its later sections.

One is very conscious that any treatment of this truly great subject must be inadequate ; the best, then, that one can hope for these pages is that they may serve in some measure to increase interest in a theme that is the greatest conception of the New Testament, and is rapidly becoming the supreme religious ideal of our time.

I wish to express heartiest thanks to the Rev. Principal F. North, M.A., of Brisbane, for many valuable suggestions made during the revision of the MS. for the Press, and to the Rev. W. H. Leembruggen for his great kindness in reading through the proofs for me.

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THE REALM OF GOD

CHAPTER I

THE EMERGENCE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN MODERN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

(It is a truism that we may stand in the great movements of history without understanding their meaning or knowing their direction.

In the world of religion we are in the throes of such a movement just now ; and yet many seem to be quite unconscious of it. There is now coming to its birth in the soul of the Christian Church a conception of Christian enterprise that fills the future with hope.

It is the depressing belief of many that the nineteenth century, with its relentless criticism and strict investigation of the historical sources of Christianity, has left us a great many things in ruins ; it is not given to them to see that all that investigation is

now beginning to issue in a constructive movement—in a revival of potent Christian ideas in our generation. It is, in fact, issuing in a notable revival of interest in the great Figure of the Gospels, whose historicity it formerly called in question. The nineteenth century threw its searchlight upon Jesus to discover His place in history, and, whether it willed it or not, invested Him with a new and greater interest for future generations.)

Twenty years ago the late Principal Fairbairn, writing of this long and critical analysis of last century, said: "The analytical process is not yet complete, and the synthetic has hardly well begun."¹ The synthesis has now definitely commenced, and we are witnessing the rise of a constructive movement in Christian thought, which will yet set Christianity forth in clearer relief as the steadfast hope of our times.

To the present writer it seems that the most prominent features of this movement are the rediscovery of the Kingdom of God as it shone in the soul of Jesus, and the growing belief that in it we have the greatest idea and the sublimest spiritual enterprise of

¹ "Christ in Modern Theology," p. 19.

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the centuries, destined to become the burning centre of Christian thought and activity in the modern world.)

(It must be admitted that Christianity cannot be adequately construed in terms of any single conception, however comprehensive; yet its rehabilitation in the light of this great central idea of Jesus will be full of meaning for the world in its present perplexity, will help to interpret all that is best in our Theology of Redemption, and, if vividly realized, will provide a dynamic to quicken all the slumbering energies of the Church.) This, to many, will appear to be an extravagant claim, and it will need justification; but the writer is of opinion that the claim can be made out, (if the conception of the Kingdom be realized in the breadth, spirituality and potency of its earliest manifestation in the soul of Jesus.

We of this age are, of course, not the first to come under the spell of this spacious idea of the Kingdom. (The notion that it hardly exists in the Epistles, and has been almost wholly neglected by the dogmatic theologians, falls a good deal short of the truth.) It is present in the Epistles, but is there set forth in different terminology; and, although it

certainly has not received justice at the hands of the theologians generally, yet it is recognized, but not adequately interpreted. Ever since the publication of Ritschl's famous "Justification and Reconciliation," in which he clearly restores it to its central place in the scheme of Christian thought, the literature on the Kingdom of God has been steadily growing, and its fascination for thoughtful minds increasing. (To-day, accordingly, there is a great wealth of published opinion on the subject, and there are the widest differences in the beliefs that prevail. Some still hold to the ancient Chiliastic view, and look for the splendour of a visible Kingdom appearing suddenly at the end of the age ; others of the modern school of Johannes Weiss conceive the Kingdom as taught by Jesus eschatologically ; there are still a good many modern Augustinians prepared to defend the doctrine that the realm of God on earth is the organized Catholic Church ; and there is a growing host of eager souls who believe that in the midst of life that now is, in this very disordered and bewildered world, we are to find the glory of the reign of God.)

The (general defect, however, of all this admirable body of literature is that the

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Kingdom is not presented to us *dynamically*—that is, it is held before us usually as a supremely great idea, but there is little indication as to the way in which the idea is to issue potently in the reconstruction of human life to-day.)

In the soul of Jesus the Kingdom of God was the *élan de vie* of His great mission to men ; but to-day we are chiefly occupied in defining the idea of it, in discussing whether it had for Christ an eschatological or a present significance, and whether we should accordingly construe it apocalyptically or interpret it in terms of human life as we see and know it in this day of grace ; and, even if we decide upon the last-mentioned interpretation, we generally leave the matter there, without proceeding to show the incidence of the Kingdom upon the actual and hard-pressed lives of men.

This, of course, is a very real difficulty, which has quite naturally arisen. It is comparatively easy to say, as Ritschl does in many ways, that the Kingdom of God is the highest good of human life, and that it is God's final end for the world ; but it is much more difficult to indicate *how* we are to realize this highest good in the world that

stares us in the face. Orr, in fact, complains that, although the Kingdom of God fills Ritschl's pages, it still remains with him a somewhat abstract conception,¹ that the sole guidance he gives us for its realization "is that men are to act in their relations to each other from the motive of love."² This same criticism might be made of many other modern presentations of the Kingdom of God. (We ought, however, in the presence of this generalizing tendency, to remember that the Kingdom of God was once not only an idea, but a great enthusiasm flaming like the fire of God in the souls of men, that the beloved community in the earliest days of our honourable religion was felt, with passionate earnestness and exhilaration, to be veritably a new order in the earth, set up in the world for its deliverance.) It will therefore be the aim of the writer of these pages, all through the necessary discussions on the meaning of the idea, to bear in mind the object for which they are written, namely, the present realization within individual souls and in human society generally of the Realm of God, towards which objective he will ever strive to move.

¹ "Ritschlian Theology," p. 119.

² *Ibid.*, p. 258.

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It may be well, at the outset, to say something about the causes that have brought the Kingdom into such prominence in our time.

(1) *Historical Influences*.—It has been said by Orr that Ritschl, and the members of his school, have done more than any other modern theologians to make the Kingdom of God the ruling conception in our Christian thinking.¹ This, doubtless, is true; but the present glowing interest in the Kingdom of God, and the manifest tendency to make it dominant in Christian life, are due primarily to an *historical movement* of much more profound significance than the teaching of any group of theologians. It is largely the outcome of the great movement of last century, which swept on irresistibly to the rediscovery of the historic Christ.

Many date the beginning of this period of critical research from the appearance of Strauss' "Leben Jesu" in 1835 (although Schweitzer dates it from Reimarus in the eighteenth century).² But long before the time of Strauss, Herder had declared that if we would understand the pure religion of

¹ "Christian View of God and the World," pp. 351-2.

² "Quest of the Historical Jesus," p. 13 f.

Christ, in contrast to its artificial historical development, we must go back to the original documents and study the Christian sources.¹ It is held by many that the notable body of literature written upon the "Life of Christ" had its beginning in Herder.

Several other great names in Theology and Philosophy ought, of course, to be mentioned in connection with this historical movement, such as Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Schelling and others. It was, however, the publication of the radical "Leben Jesu" of Strauss, that threw the challenge of historical investigation so dramatically and scornfully at the feet of orthodoxy. This virile book, with its unrelenting attempt to apply the mythical theory thoroughly to the Gospel records, created a perfect whirlwind of controversy. The next few years saw the theological and biblical world shaken by the violence of it to its foundations. The historical basis of the Gospels had been impugned, and it was poor consolation to the champions of orthodoxy to be told that the sacred records were *ideally* true. So the movement to examine rigorously every shred of the historical evidence, and to search the whole area on which

¹ Vide "Christ in Modern Theology," pp. 199-203.

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the Christian religion was said to have arisen rapidly gained strength: it was impossible to stop the onward sweep of its progress. The historical spirit was in fact wide awake in the realm of religion, as it had been for some time in other realms of inquiry, and the appearance on the scene of Baur, with his special theory to account for the development of Christianity as we have it elaborated in the books of the New Testament, gave fresh stimulus to the movement. Renan, as it is well known, soon entered the field with his "Vie de Jesus," in which with quiet easy confidence he believed himself to have reduced the Gospel records to legends, highly imaginative and idealistic, but built upon a substratum of truth.

So the restless spirit of inquiry swept on through the Continent and Great Britain, bent on the discovery of the true Jesus of history. One of its recent developments is the appearance of the school of J. Weiss, Schweitzer and others, who interpret the teaching of Jesus chiefly in the light of contemporary Jewish eschatological ideas. What, then, is the significance of this great movement, that held on its way through the rest of the century?

As a whole, it was a revolt against the artificial elaboration of dogmatic and ecclesiastical Christianity. Deep down in their souls men felt that our religion was simpler and diviner than the prevailing statement of it: that in its essence, and in its earliest manifestation in the life of Jesus, it was much clearer and fuller of human feeling than the Christianity of the Creeds and Confessions.

Weary of the metaphysical interpretation of Christ's person and the heavy expositions of the dogmatic theologians, men turned to the Gospels, and there the warm human interest of the life of Jesus came like the breath of God upon their souls. Here was the breath of a new morning for the Christian world; here was no *odium theologicum*, no metaphysics to prove that God dwelt with man, but simply a great, serene life full of God, overflowing in all its speech and action with the compassionate love of God for man; here was a life manifestly Divine by its demeanour, and, by its unaffected sympathies, manifestly human.

Therefore as the inquiry proceeded with the years, the fascination of this lofty historical Figure grew upon men; they saw him there

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on the hills of Galilee outlined against the open sky, looking with clear eyes upon the crowds, and giving to them upon His living voice a Gospel, that made God seem to be more real than the corn that grew on the hills, or the sun that shone in the heavens.)

We are all more or less familiar with the large body of literature on the Christ of history; it grows richer every day. Dr. T. R. Glover's "The Jesus of History" is recent welcome evidence that the spell of those earliest years is still upon us. Mr. H. G. Wood, in an article on "The Life and Teaching of Jesus," in Peake's "Commentary on the Bible,"¹ is evidently of opinion that historical investigation has disclosed to us the fragmentary character of our information about Jesus, and that it is so fragmentary that "the life of Jesus can never be written." But the "fragments" are sufficient to set before us the outlines of a personality that is clear and unmistakable, and a spirit that is the very soul of the Christian religion.

It need scarcely be stated that the rediscovery of the Jesus of history meant the rediscovery of His viewpoint, of the great central ideas that lay at the heart of His

¹ "Peake's Commentary," p. 659.

teaching. Therefore, as the greatest of these was the Kingdom of God, this lofty conception has been growing upon us during the past four or five decades. The prominence that it has in Ritschl is due to potent historical influences, for he was a child of his day and generation.

We accordingly find that to-day the Synoptic Gospels, and their central teaching on the Kingdom, are clothed with a peculiar interest for us all. The tide is now turning. The long process of analysis, begun a hundred years ago and probably earlier, has spent most of its force ; it has taken not a little from us, but it has given us a Christ clear enough against the background of history to arrest the eye and stir the soul, and has created within us a burning desire to see and to feel religion as He saw and felt it. The tide is turning ; it is already setting away from the analytical towards the constructive process in Christian thought. On every hand there are voices calling to us to form into a synthesis all that the analysis of a century has given us ; and the great, bewildered world itself, shaken to its foundations by the recent terrible conflict and confronted by the ruin and devastation of

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it all, calls upon us to set before itself some positive gospel that will help to build up again its broken institutions, and to save its soul.

This constructive movement will tend to issue in the fuller realization within human society of a realm of God, conceived not merely socially in the narrower sense of the term, but spiritually, and perceived *sub specie æternitatis*, as Jesus Himself realized it.

(2) *Theological Influences*.—In addition to these historical movements there are also theological influences, which have contributed to the prominence of the Kingdom of God in the thought of to-day.

The late Professor Orr prefaces a criticism of the Kingdom as the essence of Christianity by saying: "It is the school of Ritschl, however, which has done most to carry out consistently this all-ruling notion of the Kingdom of God, making it the determinative conception even in our ideas of sin, of the Person of Christ, etc. Through their influence it has penetrated widely and deeply into current theological thought, and is creating for itself quite an extensive literature."¹

¹ "Christian View of God and the World," pp. 351-2.

This literature has, of course, grown immensely since Orr wrote these words.

Ritschl, while making the Kingdom of God central in his system of doctrine, acknowledges that earlier thinkers emphasized the importance of this idea. "Kant," he says, "was the first to perceive the supreme importance for ethics of the Kingdom of God as an association of men bound together by the laws of virtue. But it remained for Schleiermacher first to employ the true conception of the teleological nature of the Kingdom of God to determine the idea of Christianity. This service of his ought not to be forgotten even if he failed to grasp the discovery with a firm hand."¹

Ritschl, however, by his comprehensive treatment of this idea, was responsible more than any other for the great revival of interest in it. His notable "Justification and Reconciliation" (Vol. III of the original) is full of it. He is never weary of stating, with an emphasis that would be monotonous if the matter were not so supremely important, that the Kingdom of God is God's final end for the world; that it is the completed revelation of God Himself; that it was the

¹ "Justification and Reconciliation," E.T., p. 11.

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great aim of Christ to establish a community in the earth, whose life and fellowship would be determined by the principle of love. In various ways these ideas resound all through the chapters of his famous book. A couple of quotations will suffice: "Since Jesus Himself, however, saw in the Kingdom of God the moral end of the fellowship He had to found, since He understood by it not the common exercise of worship, but the organization of humanity through action inspired by love, any conception of Christianity would be imperfect and therefore incorrect which did not include this specifically teleological aspect."¹

Further, he says: "The creation of this fellowship of love among men, accordingly, is not merely the end of the world, but at the same time the completed revelation of God Himself, beyond which none other and none higher can be conceived."²

Ritschl's great merit is that, although he may not have filled up for us in detail the content of the conception of the Kingdom of God as a community bound together in the fellowship of love, and although he may have

¹ "Justification and Reconciliation," E.T., p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, p. 291.

used the word "community" ambiguously with reference to the Church and the Kingdom, which he differentiates from one another, he does insist with a fine emphasis that the Kingdom of God is to be realized in present human society. It is not God's final end for the world because at the consummation of the age it will come with power upon the clouds of heaven, but because it is to be realized among men here and now, and is destined with its holy fellowship and its high ideals to dominate the earth.

Ritschl complains that Christ's idea of an eternal fellowship controlled by love and widening to the limits of the world "failed to maintain itself as central in the practical interest of the apostles, and came to possess only the limited sense of the redemptive consummation expected in the future. Cares about the formation of congregations came so much to the front that the entire moral interest was concentrated on their internal consolidation."¹

He also complains that the Reformers and the Evangelical Confessions also fail to apprehend this, as they either construe the Kingdom entirely as the union of the believer

¹ "Justification and Reconciliation," E.T., p. 284.

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with God or interpret it eschatologically. (*Vide* "Justification and Reconciliation," E.T., pp. 286, 287, 288).

Therefore (as a protest against the inadequate treatment of the Kingdom by the orthodox theologians, and as a thorough-going development of the interpretation begun by Kant in philosophy and by Schleiermacher in theology, Ritschl's doctrine of the Kingdom of God helped to create a new movement in Christian thought, which has swept on through various channels and gathered strength till the present day.)

(The differences and antagonisms that exist among the theologians of the school of Ritschl are well known ; but it may be held that the conception of the Kingdom of God is common to most of them. They certainly do not all follow Ritschl's interpretation of this great Christian conception. He, as we have seen, taught that the scene of the Kingdom was this present world. Kaftan placed its full glory beyond the world in the eternal future, but believed in the existence of a spiritual community here, which would prepare the way for this consummation ; while the later school of J. Weiss and others believe it to be wholly eschatological in the mind of Jesus.)

So the literature on this engaging subject is growing in interest and in power. The comparatively recent and thorough-going attempt to prove that Christ's view of the Kingdom was really only a refinement of Jewish apocalyptic ideas has challenged our interest in this subject ; and British scholarship, as we shall see, has given us in recent years, as an answer to this position, several stimulating books, which aim at solving the problem of Christ's apocalyptic and eschatological sayings in their relationship to a present Kingdom of God in the souls of men.

(3) *Present Tendencies*.—Another reason for the prominence of the Kingdom of God in our thought to-day is the present reaction against a narrow individualism in religion and the growing interest in the great causes of humanity.

It need hardly be stated that many a right-minded man—for example, the kind of man who recently fought very gallantly on the fields of France or Flanders—does not appear to be properly anxious about the salvation of his own soul ; but beneath all the nonchalance of his demeanour may be found a very real interest in the misguided

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world, for the sake of which he lately adventured all that he had. Why is it difficult to make him concerned about his own spiritual progress, and why is it comparatively easy to stir him to emotion and enthusiasm respecting the misfortunes and problems of others?

The answer is that his state of mind, prejudiced as it may be, is in large measure the outcome of our inadequate interpretation of Christianity too strictly as personal salvation alone, and, particularly, of our failure to set forth in our religious life the spacious ideal of the Christian fellowship and the warm, human interest of the soul of Jesus.

This mental attitude referred to, admittedly has its perils; for, if it really means less emphasis on the individual soul, it is most disquieting. Religion, of course, is strictly personal. It is a man's soul that makes his world; and upon the redemption of his soul all waits. Harnack is surely right in declaring that the whole teaching of Christ is a matter of "God and the soul, the soul and its God"¹; and, again, in saying that "the Kingdom comes by coming to the individual, by entering into his soul and laying hold of it."² Yet

¹ "What is Christianity?" p. 58.

² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

the matter cannot end there ; for the redemption of the individual soul issues inevitably in the beloved community, in the household of faith—that new order in the earth—destined, in the mind of Christ, to bind men together in the love and fellowship of God.

But scarcely ever, either in their thinking or their practice, have men risen to the full height of the New Testament conception. The hermits escape from the world, which their Master poured out all His life to save ; the Lutheran Reformation, with its fine emphasis upon individualism and upon personal accountability to God, soon falls into a state of mind more sensitive to its theological viewpoint or to its own justification than to the open sorrows of the world ; and the Evangelism, which for the past two centuries has filled such a large and honourable place in the world's religious life, which in John Wesley, for instance, combined so admirably personal holiness with a fine social enthusiasm, loses to-day in so many quarters the large tolerance and catholic spirit of the Christ, and fails to share richly the reach of His thought of God and the depth of His love of men.

Do we not all deplore the spirit which makes men keenly sensitive to the eternal

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well-being of their own souls, but, without vigorous protest, allows them to be strangely insensitive to the great spreading world, with its desperate wrongs and its appalling areas of vice and misery? It is that religious individualism, which allows a man to be absorbed in his own redemption, and to be heedless, without reproach, of the manifest ruin and the open sorrows of the world, against which there is such a strong reaction to-day.

(We are realizing more and more that the lot of Christianity is being cast in the broader fields of the world, and that there its personal and social aspects will meet in harmony. Modern psychology is teaching us that one can only adequately realize his personality socially; that in the depths of it are laid the racial instincts; that we are, in fact, all bound up together in this eventful human life of ours, and therefore withdraw from the society of our fellows at our peril.)

If, then, we recover in these days a true disinterested enthusiasm for the great causes of humanity, and if we are prepared to espouse them for Christ's sake, it will mean for all kindled by it, the finding of fuller life in God. There is evidence that this spirit is growing amongst us. The recent great war,

unparalleled in its suffering, unsurpassed in its heroism, has given us imperishable evidence that in the day of extremity the people still "offer themselves willingly." (It has proved to us that many an average man, with no reputation for spirituality or for response to ideals, is capable of a great self-renunciation in the presence of life's solemn issues. It is a commonplace that, for the sake of scientific research, of aviation, of patriotism, men will adventure all; and it is largely true that they are not adventuring all for the sake of religion, because they do not clearly see *what* it calls upon them to do, or *why* it calls upon them to do it.)

The Kingdom of God will set before them this vision. It is looming up before the eyes of the Christian world as the greatest cause that we have ever looked upon; its outlines are not yet quite clear to most of us; it is, to many, sublime and compelling, but as yet indefinite; it is there before us like some radiant vision that our eyes but dimly see; it is a call from the awful heights sounding upon our ears as yet too dull of hearing; but, in our best and holiest moments, it is a great hope, in which we see a new and better morning for the old familiar world.

CHAPTER II

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE MIND OF CHRIST

THERE seems to lie, in Christ's great conception of the Kingdom of God, a world of meaning that has not yet been satisfactorily expressed. That meaning is *felt*, more or less intensely, all through the Christian world just now: it is partially expressed in the large body of literature on this arresting subject, but it has not been set forth wholly and dynamically, as the very soul of Christian enterprise, for which our eager, wistful age is waiting.

Probably no New Testament idea has been more carefully analysed in recent years. Scholars of all schools of thought in Britain, America and on the Continent have traced for us its historical root in Judaism and its place and development in Jewish apocalyptic and Christian literature, estimated with great care the Jewish eschatological element in our

Lord's conception of it, given us learned chapters on Christ's Messianic office and consciousness, on the titles "Son of God" and "Son of Man," and discussed at great length the inevitable question as to whether Jesus preached a present or a future Kingdom. All this has been most carefully and elaborately set forth by many able writers, whose works are named at the end of this chapter.

But how often, after reading with care and hopefulness a whole admirable treatise along these lines, does one feel that the writer strangely has missed the shining goal! He has explained to us the terminology, and the history and development of the idea, but he does not seem to have seen with wondering eyes the great realm of God, that shone in the soul of Jesus, and that flashes now and then upon us, as we read the Gospels, as the only hope of the world. The familiar truth that the essence and beauty of a thing are often lost to us in a too careful analysis of it, is written large upon a good deal of our New Testament exposition of the Kingdom of God.

The reason of this is, no doubt, that it is much easier to analyse the words of Jesus as they lie before us in the pages of the

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Synoptic Gospels, than to interpret the *soul* of Jesus, to share His clear vision of God and human life, and to be thrilled by the emotions that were a great deep within Him. Nevertheless, may we not, guided by our records, reverently seek to know something of His inner life and thought, and, in the light of this, endeavour to interpret the greatest idea of His teaching?

That the Kingdom of God is Christ's greatest idea a growing number will admit; they will agree with Harnack that "His whole doctrine can be conceived as a message of the Kingdom,"¹ and with A. B. Bruce that it is "an exhaustive category," and that "there is no other that is entitled to be placed above it."² This claim by no means rests merely on the frequency of the term in the Synoptic Gospels—though this is remarkable; it is not based simply on the fact that most of the parables are parables of the Kingdom, but on the greater fact that all the teaching of Jesus, whether ethical, redemptive or eschatological, may be expressed in terms of it, although this may not be felt to be desirable.

¹ "What is Christianity?" p. 64.

² "The Kingdom of God," pp. 40, 41.

No discussion of the historical root of the term "Kingdom of God" in the Old Testament, or of its subsequent development in Jewish apocalyptic literature, is here contemplated. This has been set forth so frequently in the literature on the Kingdom that any attempt at a repetition of it would be quite out of place. It is, of course, closely connected with the Messianic hope in the Old Testament, and the reader may be referred to Schürer's "History of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus Christ,"¹ or to any of the admirable shorter works by English writers mentioned at the close of this chapter.

It might just be mentioned in passing that the popular view that Christ's contemporaries looked for a spectacular national kingdom, which would break in pieces the hated Roman power, is not the whole of the matter, and does little justice to the more spiritual view prevailing in the more thoughtful circles of Judaism. Mr. Claude G. Montefiore, in an article on "Contemporary Jewish Religion" in Peake's "Commentary on the Bible,"²

¹ "History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ," E.T. Div. II, Vol. II, §29, partic. p. 168ff. *Vide* also Beyschlag "N.T. Theology," E.T. Vol. I, p. 43ff.

² Peake's Commentary, p. 625.

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draws attention to its worthier spiritual features.

The Old Testament, in which the term Kingdom of God does not definitely occur, in its spiritual ideas of a reign of God in Israel provides an ample basis for this higher view. At the same time it must be recognized that, after the close of the Old Testament Canon, Jewish apocalyptic literature, in its despair of the present evil world, placed the Kingdom in the future with its catastrophic end of the age, and obscured the more spiritual view of the Old Testament by all the spectacular pageantry of its portrayal of the final *dénouement* of the world's history.

The great revival of interest in the eschatology of the Gospels, during the last thirty or forty years, and the appearance of so much stimulating literature on this theme have helped to focus attention on the Kingdom of God. We have, on the one hand, the extravagant claims of the thorough-going eschatologists of the school of Johannes Weiss, Schweitzer and of many others, who hold that eschatology is the very essence of the teaching of Christ, who was a Jew of His time, with a Jew's apocalyptic outlook on the world. In their opinion we do violence

to His teaching when we declare that He preached a reign of God, which would gradually develop through the moral and spiritual progress of the race—this is illegitimately to read modern ideas into His teaching. “He passes by our time,” says Schweitzer, “and returns to His own”¹; and later, “Jesus as a concrete historical personality remains a stranger to our time.”²

This eschatological interpretation is so thorough as to press into its mould the teaching of Christ as a whole. It does not except even His ethical teaching. Most of us think that the sublime ethics of the Sermon on the Mount are quite independent of eschatology, that they have an absolute value of their own, are perfectly ageless and gain nothing by being read in the light of the final consummation of the age; but these extreme eschatologists declare them to be an Interim-ethic, dependent for their value and meaning on the approaching end of the world. Their position, generally, is this:—That Christ urged men not to lay up treasure on the earth, for it was not worth while as the world and all the glory of it was hurrying

¹ “The Quest of the Historical Jesus,” p. 397.

² *Ibid.*, p. 399.

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to its end. Why should a man distress himself with the things of this present age, when its doom was already sounded, and as his *summum bonum* was in the great day of God, which was quickly coming? This eschatological interpretation goes even so far as to throw its vesture upon the sublime idea of "eternal life," which is not essentially the life of the soul that begins here through faith in Christ, and is enjoyed more fully beyond death, but the life of the new æon, which Jesus and His disciples believed to be drawing near. The extreme nature of this eschatological theory is revealed by Schweitzer, who declares that the eschatological school is to blame for applying its theory only to part of the teaching of Jesus, and not to the whole of His public work!¹

At the other extreme is the well-known theory of Wellhausen, who makes short work of the apocalyptic and eschatological elements in the Gospels by declaring that they are superimposed upon the teaching of Jesus, which was really free from them, by the eschatological bias of later minds. He would therefore delete all passages with an apocalyptic colouring, as being not an integral

¹ "Quest of the Historical Jesus," p. 349.

part of the original teaching of our Lord. This treatment of the Gospels is far too radical to be trustworthy, and it is now generally held that the solution of the problem does not lie in this direction.

Between these two schools of thought there are many others such as that of von Dobschütz, who, with his theory of "transmuted eschatology,"¹ occupies an intermediate position. There are also several other very suggestive treatments of the problem to be found in Worsley's "Apocalypse of Jesus," Muirhead's "The Eschatology of Jesus," Manson's "Christ's view of the Kingdom of God," Emmet's "The Eschatological Question in the Gospels," and Scott's "The Kingdom and the Messiah," which largely succeed in harmonizing the ethical and the eschatological aspects of Christ's teaching, and, with commendable ability and much scholarship, show that Jesus preached a Kingdom that was both present and future.

In answer to the extreme eschatologists it may, first of all, be said that the arresting thing in every great religious teacher is not that which he shares with the conventional

¹ "The Eschatology of the Gospels," p. 150.

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mind of his day, but the new and original contribution that he makes to the thinking of his time. It is always both unscientific and unjust to reduce his thought to that of the common mind: with that mind he undoubtedly shares much; but, if we would estimate his place and interpret his thought, we must set the new content of his teaching in clear relief against the background of contemporary opinion.

There have been many attempts to level the thought of Jesus down to the Jewish mind of His day. It would be unfair to the able writers of the modern eschatological school to say that they deliberately endeavour to reduce the thought of Jesus to the contemporary level; but their general argument certainly leads in this direction. They seek to show that Christ's lofty conception of the Kingdom was, in its essence, Jewish: that not only was the phrase itself in current use, but that the content of the idea is really to be found in Jewish apocalyptic thought: that, although it may have surpassed Jewish teaching in its spirituality, and in the breadth of its application, it nevertheless sprang from that common stock of ideas, and is not *essentially* different from them; and, more-

over, it is far removed from our modern conception of a realm of God gradually widening with the progress of the race.

With this question we shall be occupied in detail later on ; but let it now be said that in this way we shall never truly understand Christ. A study of contemporary opinion is a very inadequate approach to the genius of Jesus. His genius so completely transcended the thinking of His time, that to understand it we must seek to approach it as a new thing, apart from all our categories, and afterward relate it to its mental and spiritual surroundings. Even a casual study of the Gospels reveals to us the constant surprise and bewilderment of the people at this new and challenging element of His teaching. Jesus is, in fact, so original that His ideas constantly break the mould of the words that He uses, and His meaning threatens to escape from us.

If we wish to get at the heart of this sublime conception of the Kingdom of God, it may be doubted whether we should begin with the word " Kingdom " at all, for it is in danger of immediately suggesting to us that which is merely secondary in the thought of Jesus. The word " kingdom " will tend to

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suggest the *external* features of a Divine dominion—features that were prominent in the thought of the Jewish apocalyptist, who despaired of the present, but looked forward to a splendid reign of God in the gleaming future ; features that have ever been prominent in the ideal of those who believe in a theocracy with its impressive and commanding ecclesiasticism ; features that are also supreme in the eyes of many to-day, who make the Kingdom of God synonymous with social amelioration and reconstruction, but which are not the dominant factors in the idea of Jesus.

The terminology of the great doctrine of the Kingdom must, of course, be carefully examined, but a wise beginning will be made if we think first of the glorious idea *per se*, that struggled for expression in these familiar words, and, afterwards turn attention to the vesture through which its glory shone.

To reach the soul of the matter, we must first of all endeavour to realize Christ's point of view regarding God and human life ; we must look out upon Palestine and its world of men and women through His eyes, and must strive to feel some of the ideas and emotions that came surging up from the

depths of His being. This, truly, is difficult, for we are not thrilled, as He was, by the love of God and men that moved Him so deeply ; we do not feel, as He did, the fountain of the great deep broken up within us by our compassionate interest in others ; nevertheless, we must make the attempt to feel the inward stress and movement of His life.

Is not the key to the thought and feeling of Jesus to be found in His clear, all-absorbing sense of God ? The Being of God seemed to fill all His horizon, and was His breath of life day by day. He was not one who simply " believed " in God : He seemed to feel the lift of the tides of God's Being in all that He said and did. Religion to Him was simply a matter of casting one's all upon the life of God, out of sheer love of it. It was not the stuffy, indoor ritual of His day ; it was not the recital of conventional prayers, or the punctilious observance of every jot and tittle of the law ; it was the deep and free enjoyment of the life of God, that comes flowing like a full tide into every soul that is open to it.

When the Scribes and Pharisees thought of God, they thought of a Temple, of the

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ritualistic obligations of a theocracy, and of the outward features of a splendid reign of God appearing in the future, clear and "terrible as an army with banners"; when Jesus thought of God, He felt in His soul the surge of that life that

"rolls through all things."

Now, as God was the soul of life to Him, the supreme thing, to His mind, was the *rule* of God. There was to Him a Divine dominion here in this world and extending far out beyond its confines. He had yielded to this gladly with all His soul, for His meat was to do the will of God.¹ The realm of God, accordingly, was already set up in His soul; the banners of the Kingdom of God were already spread above that impregnable citadel, against which neither the assaults of all the world, nor its glamour, could prevail. The realm of God, then, as preached by Jesus, began in His own soul.

Most of His contemporaries had their eyes upon the spectacular features of a reign of God, that all could behold; the apocalyptic vision of the Vindication of Jehovah and the great coming day of His power had so central

¹ John iv. 34.

a place in their thought, that they could not escape it. Jesus, on the contrary, had already escaped from it—at any rate, from the externalism of it ; He had flung all the pomp and magnificence of it aside, with other and baser ambitions, at the Temptation ; and now, although He used the popular phrase and figures of speech, the Kingdom of God meant for him *primarily* the reign of God in the soul of man, and, consequently, the rule of God in human society—a dominion established in the present, but destined to be manifested in greater spiritual power and glory in the future.

Do we not, in moments of spiritual exaltation, feel the truth and power of all this ? If, in a moment of clear intuition and strong feeling, when God is everything to us and the world nothing, we venture all for the sake of pure love of Him, and the exhilaration of doing His will, do we not then feel, what Christ must have felt constantly, the supremacy of the spiritual and the glory of that kingdom of the spirit lifted high over all the tottering kingdoms of the earth, and do we not know that this dominion of the Eternal is the only thing worth living for ultimately ? Jesus, doubtless, felt this and lived for it

always ; His difficulty was to express it in popular speech with its conventional meanings. But He seemed to realize that, if He cast this Divine enthusiasm into the souls of others, He would be creating a new society in the earth—a new world order, which would become the light of men, like a town on the top of a hill that could not be hidden. This new and vivid consciousness of God, this revival of the Divine within men, this freshening of all the springs of life, this lift of the Eternal in the midst of time was the Kingdom of God. As Harnack says, “ True, the Kingdom of God is the rule of God ; but it is the rule of the holy God in the hearts of individuals ; *it is God Himself in His power.*”¹ Later, he says, “ It is in its very nature a spiritual force, a power which sinks into a man within, and can be understood only from within.”²

Therefore was the Kingdom of God “ at hand ” (ἤγγικεν) when Jesus, with the lustre of these ideas lighted in His soul, began His ministry. He felt in Himself the glory of this reign of God, which would spread like leaven until there was in the earth, not a splendid Jewish theocracy, not a commanding

¹ Op. cit., p. 57.

² *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Holy City set over against pretentious Rome, not the highly-coloured consummation of the apocalypticist, but a society of the redeemed, wider than any nation, whose inward righteousness, holy love, and compassionate human interest would at length dominate the lives of men.

This, I take it, from the first was the *germ*, at any rate, of Christ's idea of the Kingdom, although, no doubt, the idea developed during the course of His ministry. His apocalyptic utterances do not contradict this. When He uses the language of Daniel and speaks of the "Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven," may He not have been thinking of the fuller glory of this reign of God amongst men, of the greater manifestation of the Divine power which the future held? When He declares that some of those who stood by would not taste of death until they had seen the Kingdom of God come with power, may He not have been referring to Pentecost, or to some other notable manifestation of the Divine presence and power that His followers were later to enjoy? With these and other similar passages we shall be more fully occupied later on. Meanwhile, to use the language of Professor D. S. Cairns, we need

not think that, in these apocalyptic utterances, "Jesus has relapsed into Judaism, that the mind which rose sovereign over the barrenness of Jewish legalism, has become befogged in the clouds of the Jewish Apocalyptic."¹

It is suggested by Rauschenbusch² that if Christ did not mean by the Kingdom of God the consummation of the Jewish theocratic hope, then it was a misleading and a dangerous phrase for Him to use, as it would raise these prevalent ideas in the minds of His hearers. A position very close to this is taken up by Professor A. G. Hogg in his much appreciated book, "Christ's Message of the Kingdom."³

But Jesus did not shrink from dangerous phrases. He took the risk of them, as every great and original prophet must, and He accepted the consequences. The evident surprise of the multitudes and the consternation of the religious leaders are a tribute to the

¹ "Christianity in the Modern World," p. 199.

² "Christianity and the Social Crisis," p. 57.

³ p. 31, 34. Professor Hogg holds that Christ meant by the Kingdom substantially what John the Baptist meant by it, viz. the apocalyptic idea of a supernatural world culmination.

freshness, originality, and the peril of His teaching. (He evidently used familiar phrases, but He seemed to fill them with such a bewilderingly new and alarming content, that His teaching was strange and unusual, quite unlike the dicta of the Scribes and Pharisees—in fact it was, to many, revolutionary and subversive of the things they had been taught to respect.

Professor Hogg says, "For a teacher it would surely have been foolish and for a prophet hardly honest, to have made use of a current term of speech in a sense fundamentally different from anything previously understood by it."¹

But this, indeed, is not so, if the prophet explains and elaborates the new interpretation of the term as he goes along, as Christ did in His parables and in large sections of His ethical teaching. If any luminous teacher arises with a larger and richer interpretation of any prevailing idea, how is he to communicate it except through the form in which it has found general expression? Further, Christ's idea of the Kingdom was not so "fundamentally different from anything previously understood," that there was no

¹ Op. cit., p. 31.

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common element to serve as a link between the new and the older interpretation. As we have noticed earlier, there was among enlightened Jewish thinkers a spiritual interpretation of the Kingdom of God, that might very well have been for them a favourable approach to the teaching of Jesus on this theme.

This term, then, that Jesus found ready to His hand, gathering up in itself the spiritual hopes and aspirations of His people, provided Him with a vehicle by which He could legitimately and effectively transfer His larger ideas to the popular mind.

It is a commonplace that the data of the Kingdom of God in the Gospels are exceedingly complex. They must be so, if writers like Weiss and Schweitzer can hold that Christ's idea was essentially eschatological, and others—Wellhausen, for instance, can draw the very opposite conclusion—that the apocalyptic element has nothing to do with the original teaching of Jesus, but is due to the tendencies of a later age. Both elements are in the teaching of Christ, and an attempt must be made later to harmonize them; all I am now contending for is that this other feature of the teaching of our Lord, which

links the Kingdom to present spiritual experience, to faith in God, to the all-pervading love of the Father, to a great spiritual discovery that a man may make here and now, finding eternal treasure, as a merchant finds a splendid pearl, and to all those qualities of the human spirit, which the Beatitudes declare to involve *possession* of the Kingdom—that this teaching, which manifestly makes the Kingdom a present reality, was there in germ from the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus, and that this was the original element in His teaching upon it. The first thing, in fact, that He did after the Temptation and the announcement that the Kingdom was at hand was, not to make any eschatological application of His doctrine, but to find Simon and Andrew and to promise to make them fishers of men : thus indicating that His mission, from the beginning, was to set up the realm of God in individual souls, and to cast the spell of His own great realization of God upon the lives of others.

Professor A. G. Hogg says : “ The contrast between the message of Christ and the best of the Old Testament Messianic thought lay, not so much in a different idea of what the Kingdom of God was, as in the fact that

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while the Old Testament said 'soon,' Christ said 'now.'"¹ Herein, he thinks, "lies the most essential distinction" between the two. But I venture to think that the distinction is not merely one of time, unless it be clearly understood that this involves a change in the conception of the Kingdom. In the very fact that Christ said "now" instead of "soon" there is the emergence of the wonderfully new content, with which He filled the prevailing term, and the Kingdom became for Him, not essentially a realm of God manifest at the coming glorious consummation, but the reign of God bringing into the souls of men in the present moment the rich enjoyment of eternal life. The point is this—when a man says with conviction God is "here" and not simply "there" in the future, his consciousness of God and of the immediateness of His power becomes changed: his mind leaps to the thought of an eternal power permeating all things and exercised in all moments. This is not reading "modern" ideas into the teaching of Christ, against which practice J. Weiss, Titius and others warn us, for such views are *implicit* all through the Fourth Gospel.

¹ "Christ's Message of the Kingdom," p. 24.

The Kingdom of God, then, to Jesus was the reign of God in human souls, the dominion of God in the earth and far beyond it. It was a reign of God that was felt gloriously in His own soul, that was set up by the power of God in every life that was open to it by faith, and was destined to be manifested with greater power in the coming days.

The word βασιλεία is really of wider significance than "Kingdom" of God. Professor Moffatt, in his translation of the New Testament, renders it "Realm" of God. It might be rendered "reign," "rule," "sovereignty" of God, like its Hebrew equivalent מְלָכִיּוּת Matthew, as is well known, habitually uses βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, which has the same meaning. Schürer says that "'Heaven' here is, according to a very current Jewish expression, a metonymy for God. It is the Kingdom, which is governed not by earthly powers, but by Heaven"¹; and he goes on to point out that the formula מְלָכִיּוּת שָׁמַיִם frequently means "the kingship, the Government of

¹ "The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ." E.T. Div. II, Vol. II, p. 171.

Heaven that is the rule of God" in the Judaism of the time of Christ.¹

When, therefore, Jesus at the commencement of His public ministry declared "the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand" (*ἤγγικεν*),² He surely meant that a new era in the world's spiritual life had begun; the reign of God had begun with His public declaration of the Gospel. It was at hand because He felt its glory in His own soul, and was conscious of a power to impart it, by the gift of God, to others; it was at hand because it was the possession of every one whose heart was open to receive it. Dr. Lewis Muirhead, in a very able article on "Eschatology" in Hasting's "Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels," says: "Every one sees that when Jesus said 'The Kingdom of God is at hand' (cf. *ἤγγικεν* = has come near), or bade the disciples pray 'Thy Kingdom come,' He must have thought of the Kingdom as being still in the future."³ This does not seem to be the natural interpretation of these passages, especially of the

¹ "The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ." E.T. Div. II, Vol. II, note on p. 171.

² Mark i. 15.

³ Hasting's "Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels." Vol. I, p. 529.

first; ἡγγικεν, if it refers to the future, signifies the *immediate* future in which the Kingdom would come to all whose hearts were open to receive it. It can just as reasonably bear this meaning as the eschatological interpretation.

What is the meaning of the phrase in this striking verse (Mark i. 15): "the time is fulfilled" (Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρός)? Professor Hogg gives us Titius's rendering of the verse: "all preparations are made and what now comes is the thing itself."¹ The meaning, one ventures to suggest, is not that the time is fulfilled because the end of the age has almost come, but the time is fulfilled because at last there has appeared One on earth in whose soul the life and powers of the Kingdom of God are clearly manifest.

One would be seriously lacking in good judgment if one endeavoured to traverse ground which has already been admirably covered by the able writers whose names have been mentioned above. These authors have written at length on the details of the eschatological problem; they have, with due care, examined all the words of Our Lord which have an apocalyptic setting, with the

¹ "Christ's Message of the Kingdom," p. 35.

object of harmonizing them with His ethical sayings, which seem to contemplate a Kingdom that is obviously present. It is, then, far from my intention to attempt to set forth in detail these numerous passages. This, however, ought to be said that, in the presence of such powerful argument on the part of the extreme eschatological school, we are apt to be overborne by their persistence and to do less than justice to the large sections of the Synoptic Gospels, which clearly support the view that Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God the present reign of God in the souls of men. Take the Matthaean passages, for example, as a whole—and these passages are very numerous, for Matthew records forty-eight instances of its use by Our Lord. The author of Matthew's Gospel, admittedly, had strong eschatological tendencies. Worsley emphasizes this in several places in his suggestive book, "The Apocalypse of Jesus." This tendency is shown by his habitual use of the phrase βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν instead of βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ. This phrase, the "Kingdom of the heavens," which is not in Mark, Worsley thinks is not a Greek translation of the phrase in "Q" or the Matthaean "Logia,"

but "an ultra-eschatological phrase," which the author of the first Gospel deliberately used.¹ There are also well-known instances in which passages in Matthew have an apocalyptic setting, which they have not in Mark, e.g. Mark ix. 1, "Verily I say unto you, there be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God come with power," is rendered in Matt. xvi. 28, "till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom." Compare also Matt. xxiv. 15-16 with Luke xxi. 20-21, where in Matthew we have the apocalyptic expression, "the abomination of desolation." Yet in this Gospel of Matthew, with its definite eschatological tendency, the passages referring to the Kingdom, which lend themselves to the interpretation of the Kingdom as present, are at least twice as numerous as those which can naturally bear an eschatological meaning, and this is making rather a liberal allowance for the latter.

This, truly, should lead us to receive with greater caution the conclusions of those who confidently affirm that Christ's view of the Kingdom was *essentially* eschatological.

It is not only passages in which the term

¹ "The Apocalypse of Jesus," p. 58.

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Kingdom occurs which strengthen the position that Jesus proclaimed a present and a widening reign of God in the souls of men ; there are also other portions of the Synoptic records which strongly support this.

(1) Almost every page of the New Testament conveys the impression that Jesus set before the world a completely *new way of life*. This idea, which is both expressed and written between the lines of the records, is not simply that He proclaimed to the world a fairer hope, but that He was able to quicken all the springs of life in men and, in the present moment, to transform their world. The young man who wistfully said, " Good Master, what must I do that I may have eternal life ? " had seen the gleam of something in the soul of Christ that made all his possessions look tawdry. It was the spell of this new life, that he might enter upon, that held his soul—surely not the life of an approaching æon ! This new life was like new wine, which by its very strength would burst the old wine-skins, and must therefore be poured into new vessels.¹ In this parable, which occurs in each of the Synoptic Gospels, Our Lord reveals His own idea of His teaching

¹ Matt. ix. 17, Mark ii. 22, Luke v. 37.

and mission as a new and invigorating message to the world. In another of His parables the Kingdom is like a priceless pearl, to possess which the enthusiastic merchant sells the very roof over his head.

St. Paul was so conscious of this great accession of life that he calls it "a new creation."¹ The great phrase of the Book of Revelation, "Behold, I make all things new,"² resounds, in a present sense, all through the pages of the New Testament to the praise of Jesus Christ.

Now the Kingdom of God, indubitably, is to be interpreted in the light of this new life—this awakening of men's souls. The reign of God which Jesus proclaimed was this finding of eternal life in the midst of time; it was, without doubt, also the fuller manifestation of the Almighty's glory which the future held; but it certainly was set up there and then in the hearts of all those who discovered the secret of Our Lord.

Primarily this great experience has nothing eschatological about it. "What," says von Dobschütz, "has the triumphant hymn in the eighth chapter of Romans to do with

¹ 2 Cor. v. 17.

² Rev. xxi. 5.

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eschatology ? ”¹ The early Christians themselves, even though they had fervent hopes of an almost immediate Parousia, felt the power of this new life as a *present gift of God*. It seems to me, therefore, to say that the Kingdom of God as Jesus preached it was *wholly* eschatological, is to overlook the most obvious thing in the New Testament, i.e. the reign of God in the souls of all held captive by Christ.

(2) Further, this new life is represented as being the possession of man through *faith*. It is, of course, true that, if we hold to the eschatological interpretation of the Kingdom, we can still find a place for faith, for it will then be the soul's belief in the great apocalyptic hope, with its consequent contentment and peace of mind. This, however, is not the meaning that seems to be written on the face of the passages on faith. Faith, according to Our Lord, gave men possession of power *now* (Mark ix. 23 ; Matt. xvii. 20 ; xxi. 21, 22 ; Luke xvii. 6). The fourth Gospel assures us that “ He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life ” (John iii. 36), and this is in keeping with the assurances of the New Testament all through. The New

¹ “ The Eschatology of the Gospels,” p. 21.

Testament teaching on faith, therefore, encourages the belief in the Kingdom as *present*. (See Chapter 4, "The Kingdom of God and Faith.")

(3) The great section of the Sermon on the Mount, with its high ethical teaching on the patient bearing of injuries, liberality to those who seek our help, charity towards enemies, etc., is essentially filled with the spirit of a *present* Kingdom of God. It is boldly outlined there in the teaching of Jesus to throw into more striking relief the sensitiveness and greed of the lives of many. If the hyperbole of it be too much for the prosaic souls of the literalists, if the colouring be too high for the unimaginative, if its charity be too great a demand upon lean souls, yet we may be sure there are many who will recognize in it immediately a picture—an impressionist picture, if you will—of the kind of life that Jesus Himself lived, and that He splendidly believed would become dominant in the world. This life is the very soul of the Kingdom of God.

To say that this was a special system of ethics, brought to its birth by the approaching end of the age; to say that Christ was recommending men to part with their

substance readily, because the end of the world drew near and the glory of the Day of God was already touching the horizon, is to miss the beauty and the charm of it all. Manson finely points out that such an interpretation by no means agrees with the actual text of Our Lord's discourse, for Jesus gives us the reason why we are to love our enemies. "We are to love our enemies not because the time is short, but because the loving kindness of our Father in heaven endureth for ever. 'Love your enemies . . . that ye may be the children of your Father Who is in heaven, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good,' etc. (Matt. v. 44, 45). No one reading this passage could possibly think that the nearness of the end had anything to do with it."¹

Similarly in another part of the great discourse, we are not to lay up for ourselves treasures on earth, not because the approaching end of the world will make them valueless, but so that we may have treasure in heaven, i.e. that our chief good should be our present possession of life eternal. Again, we are not to be anxious concerning food and raiment, not because the Parousia makes

¹ "Christ's View of the Kingdom of God," p. 115.

them to appear too mundane, but because there is a greater thing to be anxious about here and now, i.e. our *life*, which we hold from God.

These ethics, then, are the ethics of that Kingdom which is the present rule of God in men's hearts, and every age, that has passed since the time of Jesus, has proved their absolute value and timeless spirit.

The thorough-going eschatologists make a very spirited attempt to press all the ethics of Christ into their mould. Schweitzer interprets even the Beatitudes eschatologically. Blessedness is the portion of those who are *predestined* to share in the coming Kingdom. "It may seem to us inconceivable," he says, "but they are really predestinarian in form. Blessed are the poor in spirit! Blessed are the meek! Blessed are the peace-makers!—that does not mean that by virtue of their being poor in spirit, meek, peace-loving they deserve the Kingdom . . . in their being poor in spirit, in their meekness, in their love of peace it is made manifest that they are predestined for the Kingdom."¹

But later on in the chapter it is manifest

¹ "The Quest of the Historical Jesus," p. 353.

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that Jesus meant the Kingdom at present in the soul, for He declares that "ye are the salt of the earth . . . ye are the light of the world." Schweitzer here simply says "These are the light of the world, which already shines among men for the glory of God"¹—and, we might add, where that light shines *there* is the Kingdom of God. This interpretation of the Beatitudes is altogether strained. Does anyone dream of believing that when Christ says "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," He means they shall be comforted *at the Parousia*? Does He mean that they who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled at the consummation of the age?

Even the Lord's Prayer is also pressed into the eschatological scheme of things. The petition "Lead us not into temptation" (*εἰς πειρασμόν*) does not, it is held, refer to individual temptation, but it is a prayer that those who earnestly look for the coming of the Kingdom may be exempted from the *πειρασμός*—the general eschatological time of temptation, which must take place before the great consummation.² The petition for

¹ "The Quest of the Historical Jesus," p. 353.

² *Ibid.*, p. 362, also 375, 387.

daily bread is connected with the feeding of the multitude, which is regarded sacramentally and eschatologically."¹

This kind of exegesis plainly shows how one may be obsessed by a theory. The Lord's Prayer with its hallowing of the Father's name, its desire that the Kingdom may come and His will be done on earth, its petition for daily bread, for forgiveness and for deliverance from temptation, is so manifestly based upon the present experience of men and a present Kingdom in their souls, that it is remarkable that any other kind of meaning could ever have been drawn from it.

The ethics of Jesus refuse to be compressed into the eschatological scheme; their setting is the soul of man, conscious of a present reign of God, and this has been confirmed by centuries of Christian experience.

There is, however, a distinct apocalyptic element in the teaching of Jesus, which calls for interpretation. We may not neglect such sections as the "Little Apocalypse" in the thirteenth chapter of Mark and its parallels in Matthew and Luke, or such passages as "there be some of them that . . . shall in no

¹ "The Quest of the Historical Jesus," pp. 374-5.

wise taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom " (Matt. xvi. 28), or our Lord's declaration before the High Priest that He would be seen coming on the clouds of heaven (Matt. xxvi. 64). Many explanations of these passages have been given, apart from the interpretation of the more thorough-going eschatologists. Wellhausen's dismissal of them all as due to the eschatological leanings of a later time is too drastic a treatment altogether, for it leads to an alarming mutilation of the Gospel records as they stand. Most explanations of this apocalyptic teaching seem to be along the line that Jesus simply used these figures of speech, because they were the popular language of His day, and in them were enshrined the spiritual ideas and aspirations of His people. He lived in a day when apocalyptic literature was eagerly studied, and so He found ready to His hand a medium of communication that He could profitably use ; but, at the same time, He greatly spiritualized the apocalyptic hope and purged it of its materialistic and spectacular features. Dr. Muirhead in his article on " Eschatology " in Hastings' " Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels " classifies the solutions of the diffi-

cult apocalyptic sayings of Jesus under three heads, viz.: (a) prophetic, (b) pictorial, (c) realistic. English-speaking scholars, he thinks, have favoured the pictorial solution of the difficulty, which recognizes that language "which must express extra-mundane realities in mundane forms" must necessarily be pictorial; but they are inclining more and more to the *realistic* solution, which recognizes, with Titius, the simple realism of the Gospels and Christ's belief "that His own generation would see the end of the present wicked world and the establishment on earth of the perfect heavenly Kingdom."¹

But in recognizing this "biblical realism" have they not been in peril of neglecting that other element, which brings before us a *present* Kingdom? This "realism" is by no means the sole feature of Christ's teaching on the Kingdom; and it is surely not accurate to say, as many do, that, in emphasizing Christ's view of the Kingdom as a reign of God in the souls of men, we are reading modern ideas into His thought, for most of His ethics sprang from His own vivid consciousness of that present dominion of God in the soul.

¹ Vol. I, p. 532.

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Harnack thinks that Christ found the apocalyptic view of the Kingdom amongst His contemporaries, and simply retained its more spiritual features, but that His own original contribution was that the Kingdom of God was God Himself in His power in the souls of men. "There can be no doubt about the fact that the idea of the two kingdoms, of God and of the devil, and their conflicts, and of that last conflict at some future time when the devil, long cast out of heaven, will be also defeated on earth, was an idea which Jesus simply shared with His contemporaries. He did not start it, but He grew up in it and He retained it. The other view, however, that the Kingdom of God 'cometh not with observation,' that it is already here, was His own."¹

F. W. Worsley suggests the following: "In order to be better understood and more widely listened to He employs the language and method and symbolism of Apocalyptic." "In short, His life is a new Apocalypse in action."² Later he says: "Herein lies the key to the true interpretation of the apocalyptic language of Jesus. He used it because

¹ "What is Christianity?" p. 55.

² "The Apocalypse of Jesus," p. 23.

of its popularity, and because of its forcefulness ; but He used it in order to warn His followers against a too literal interpretation, as touching either Himself or others.”¹

W. Manson is of the same opinion : “ Jesus chose the apocalyptic form of expression because better than any other existing in His time it enabled Him to present a spiritual idea of God’s Kingdom and His righteousness.”²

C. W. Emmet gives due weight to the eschatology, but holds that it must be subordinated to the spiritual conception of a present Kingdom. It is not more central and all-pervading with Jesus than it was with Paul.³

Professor D. S. Cairns suggests that Christ’s apocalyptic language should be taken as “lofty spiritual poetry.” “When He is strongly moved He uses imagery of the boldest kind,” e.g. when the disciples return He says : “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,”⁴ meaning that He beheld the downfall of evil. Later he expresses the

¹ “The Apocalypse of Jesus,” p. 149.

² “Christ’s View of the Kingdom of God,” p. 79.

³ “The Eschatological Question in the Gospels,” p. 59.

⁴ “Christianity in the Modern World,” p. 207ff.

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opinion that the apocalyptic language of the New Testament is "a teaching veiled in the language of poetry and symbol and yet a teaching that has its roots deep in the consciousness of Christ and in the nature of the Christian life."¹

There are, of course, several other interpretations of the apocalyptic element in the Gospels. Professor A. G. Hogg, for instance, in his exceedingly suggestive book, to which reference has been made, interprets the Kingdom of God apocalyptically but very helpfully and spiritually.² He also conceives it as present, for Christ taught that a new age had begun,³ and he lays strong emphasis on the fact that it comes not so much by the efforts and progress of the race as supernaturally by the immediate power of God.⁴

He advances the following very interesting idea towards a solution of the apocalyptic difficulty, viz., that a good deal of Christ's announcement of the consummation as close at hand "was not prediction but hope and expectation,"⁵ that the date of the consum-

¹ "Christianity in the Modern World," p. 224.

² Op. cit., pp. 33, 34ff.

³ p. 53ff.

⁴ p. 166f., also p. 63 and p. 117.

⁵ p. 42.

mation was not really fixed, for it depended on the attitude of men, that Christ hoped it would come about, and that it might have come about, if it had not been for the "incredible obstinacy of human distrust."¹

This idea is very suggestive, but is not free from peril in its interpretation of the Gospels. One can much more easily see how it applies to a consummation of the Kingdom in the souls of men, than to the supernatural consummation of the Kingdom, which Professor Hogg thinks that Christ taught. Does he mean that the great consummation, or, to use more modern terms, the end of the world would have taken place quite soon after the life of Jesus had closed, if mankind had gladly received His Gospel? It is much more difficult to believe this, than to believe that the Kingdom would have come in wondrous and undeniable power into human souls, had men exercised adequate faith in it. In the latter sense, we can well believe the consummation of the Kingdom to have been "at hand," if the conditions had been fulfilled; in the former sense, many of us will certainly hesitate to believe it.

¹ Op. cit., p. 36.

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But why should there be such extraordinary difficulty in harmonizing these two elements in the teaching of Jesus? It is the literalism of the extreme eschatologists that has exaggerated the problem. If we remember that Jesus did not state truth categorically in propositions, but that He threw it into glowing pictures, that His vivid symbolic speech will not yield up its secret to the eyes of the literalist, that, as far as we know, He wrote nothing, but committed His teaching, upon His living voice, to the memory of His hearers, we shall hesitate to interpret these figurative apocalyptic passages strictly *in the letter* as they stand.

Why should we not believe that His ethical and His eschatological utterances are really parts of the *same conception* of the Kingdom of God?

We speak frequently of the City of God; we believe it to be firmly set in the midst of the life that now is; its citizenship is the possession of all who love God here and now; it is wide as the world and wider, and life's highest aim is to establish it more and more firmly in righteousness. But we have also in our vision a City of God, that gleams in the future. Towards its shining towers and open

portals we are ever pressing on. At one time, it is the New Jerusalem on high, at another it is the tabernacle of God that is with men—the Jerusalem, which, in the greater future, descends to the earth; and if, indeed, at times it seems to hang between earth and heaven, we are in no perplexity about it. It is there beckoning us on, but no man would care to describe it strictly in set, definite, concrete terms. We hold these two conceptions together and are conscious of no contradiction and no inconsistency. There is the realm of God *here* in our souls, there is the realm of God *yonder* in the glorious distance. If we were to describe it, we should have to use the concrete terms which we shrink from, and we should become, in some sense, apocalyptists, conscious of the poverty and the ambiguity of our language; and further, we should resent the want of imagination of the literalist, who persisted in interpreting our speech rigidly in the letter. It is the office of religion ever to lift our eyes to an eternal order greater than the things of time. De Quincey reminds us, in his beautiful essay on “Levana,” that it was the office of the Roman goddess Levana to see that little children were taken at their birth and, lest

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they should grovel too long upon the earth, to have their forehead presented to the stars, as if to say, "Behold, what is greater than yourselves!" So religion, and notably the Christian religion, comes to us earth-bound sons of men presenting our forehead to the eternal realm of God, whose confines are far "beyond the utmost bound of human thought," and reminding us that it is in this wide Kingdom of our Father that we draw the breath of life. If we, then, can hold without confusion the idea of a reign of God within ourselves now, and a reign of God on high, may we not believe that our Lord Himself taught a present Kingdom of God, offered to men in His preaching and entering their souls by the power of God in response to their faith; and, at the same time, declared that the Kingdom was future, that He would come upon the clouds of heaven in power, that there was a day coming when men "shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven"?

Does not this follow from the very nature of the religious ideal which we find in Christianity? That ideal brings God into the midst of our present life, but by no means

confines Him there ; it brings the Kingdom of God to earth, but sets its consummation in the greater future. It is religion that ever lifts our eyes to a greater order than the one which we now see in the things of earth, and, at the same time, transforms earth with the light of that larger environment. Was it not, indeed, the noblest aim of apocalyptic literature, which usually arose in desperate times when the things of God were either lying waste or cruelly trampled beneath the feet of the oppressor, and the world seemed given over to the power of evil, to turn the eyes of the suffering faithful to an eternal order in which their faith and righteousness would be clearly vindicated ? We may not take kindly to its glowing symbols and its highly-coloured, other-worldly descriptions of this consummation, but we must admit that the idea at the back of it—the larger issues and ultimate triumph of faith in God—lies at the very heart of religion.

But, it may be objected, this does not meet the case, for the difficulty lies in those particular sayings which do not simply express a great future hope, but definitely predict an early approaching end of the world, and an almost immediate return of

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the Son of Man. But are we quite sure that these passages are so explicit? Unless we resort to strict literalism, it is possible to interpret some of them, at any rate, not as predictions of particular spectacular *events*, but as predictions of the fuller manifestation of the power of God. For instance, the language of Jesus to the High Priest, “*Henceforth ye shall see (ἀπ’ ἄρτι ὄψεσθε) the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven*”¹ is, on the face of it, symbolical. If our Lord meant that the High Priest and others would witness His actual return in glory, how can this be reconciled with His statement that “of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father”²?

Similarly, as we have seen, the saying that some that stand by shall not taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God come with power, recorded in the three Synoptics, notwithstanding Matthew’s eschatological setting of it, may refer to the Resurrection, or to Pentecost, or to the early rapid progress of the Gospel. Worsley is inclined to think

¹ Matt. xxvi. 64.

² Mark xiii. 32.

that it refers to the Destruction of Jerusalem. There is also, in the study of the more pronounced apocalyptic passages, the further consideration that, in the days of early Christianity when the Gospel records were written, apocalyptic expectations ran higher than in late Judaism,¹ so that we may expect to find these hopes reflected in the Gospel records.² An instance of this is, doubtless, the "Little Apocalypse" in the thirteenth chapter of Mark (with parallels in Matt. xxiv. and Luke xxi.), upon which a great deal has been written recently, but which is hardly within the scope of this inquiry.

So then, the Kingdom as preached by Jesus is primarily the reign of God in human souls; it is the rule of God in that new society founded by Christ—truly a new order in the earth, consisting of those who are redeemed and bound together, and to Him in the holy purpose of making His way of life dominant in the world, so that the will of God may be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

¹ *Vide* "The Eschatology of the Gospels," by von Dobschütz, p. 74.

² *Vide* "The Kingdom of God," by Wm. Temple, p. 10.

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Professor Adams Brown defines the Kingdom of God as follows : “ By the Kingdom of God we mean that society of redeemed personalities, of which Christ is at once the ideal and the mediator, the union of whose members one with another and with God, in the community of holy love progressively realized in history, constitutes the end for which the world exists.”¹

The Kingdom, then, is always present with us, but it is also future widening more and more unto that perfect day, when the rule of Christ shall be acknowledged to the ends of earth.

Our Lord quite evidently felt the immediate presence of this reign of God. When the Pharisees, absorbed in apocalyptic hopes, asked Him when the Kingdom would come, He said, “ The Kingdom cometh not with observation (μετὰ παρατηρήσεως), i.e. it is not something spectacular that you see approaching. Professor Moffatt’s rendering is, “ as you hope to catch sight of it.” “ Neither shall they say Lo here, or there, for behold the Kingdom of God is *within you* ” (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστίν). Some translate ἐντὸς ὑμῶν “ among you,” others

¹ “ Christian Theology in Outline,” p. 182.

“upon you,” others, e.g., Scott, suggest “it is imminent,”¹—it is in your midst all in a moment. But the most natural interpretation, required by the *ἐντός* (not simply *ἐν*) seems to be “within you,” i.e. it is not the spectacular coming of God at the end of the age, it is the reign of God *in your souls*. In this verse Jesus seems to be setting the truer inward, spiritual view of the Kingdom over against the cruder pageantry of the conventional apocalyptic hope. We may hold to this, notwithstanding the attempt of the eschatologists to give this passage an apocalyptic meaning.

Jesus evidently believed that the reign of God had begun. The “poor in spirit” were blessed because they possessed the Kingdom²; whoever would humble himself as a little child was the greatest in this realm of God³; if, indeed, a man did not receive (i.e. in the present moment) the Kingdom as a little child, he could not enter it.⁴ It was God’s good pleasure to give His little flock the

¹ “The Kingdom of the Messiah,” p. 109.

² Matt. v. 3, Luke vi. 20.

³ Matt. xviii. 4.

⁴ Mark x. 15.

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Kingdom¹ (surely a present bestowal); the discerning scribe, whose heart responded to the supreme commandment of love, was "not far from the Kingdom,"² i.e. not far, not from the hope of it, but from the *present realization* of it. It was a Kingdom that the Pharisees could hinder men from entering³ (to interpret this eschatologically is to wrest meaning from it). It was a Kingdom which men entered violently, from the days of John the Baptist (Matt. xi. 12; Luke xvi. 16). This passage in Matthew is rendered by Schweitzer, "Even until now, the Kingdom of heaven is subjected to violence, and the violent wrest it to themselves." "The saying," he says, "has nothing to do with the entering of individuals into the Kingdom, it simply asserts that since the coming of the Baptist a certain number of persons are engaged in forcing on and compelling the coming of the Kingdom."⁴ But, unfortunately for Schweitzer and his eschatological interpretation, the passage in Luke (xvi. 16) reads *καὶ πᾶς εἰς αὐτὴν βιάζεται*, which

¹ Luke xii. 32.

² Mark xii. 34.

³ Matt. xxiii. 13.

⁴ "The Quest of the Historical Jesus," p. 355.

is quite plainly, "and every man forces his way into it." This seems to have a good deal to do with individuals entering the Kingdom ; so also does the Matthæan passage, the reading of which is *καὶ βιασταὶ ἀρπάξουσιν αὐτήν*, which, surely, is to be translated "and the violent seize it" ("take it by force," R.V.), rather than, according to Schweitzer, "and the violent wrest it to themselves." Moffatt renders this passage in *Matthew* "and the violent press into it." A. G. Hogg suggests "men of violence carry it away as plunder¹," i.e. carry it off forcibly as their present possession. It was a Kingdom that would spring from the teaching of Christ, as the great tree from the mustard seed,² or that would leaven society with its power, as the leaven worked in the three measures of meal.³ So we might go on adding to the evidence. It may be possible to extract an eschatological meaning from some of these texts, but their obvious and primary meaning strengthens the conviction that Jesus inaugurated the reign of God by

¹ "Christ's Message of the Kingdom," p. 67.

² Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

³ Matt. xiii. 33.

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His public preaching of the Gospel of His grace.

The Christian religion, to strangers who take up its records for the first time, appears to be elaborate and complicated. This view of it would seem to be strengthened by the variety of beliefs and forms of worship found within its communion. But, in essence, it is a clear and simple faith. "The Christian religion," says Harnack, "is something simple and sublime; it means one thing and one thing only: Eternal life in the midst of time, by the strength and under the eyes of God."¹ These words are profoundly true. The secret of our honourable religion is the discovery of life eternal in Jesus Christ. "But these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life through His name."² The basis of Christianity is the life, mission and death of Jesus: out of this come the New Testament, the Church, and all Christian experience and achievement. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." What then, was this life; for it is the soul of the Kingdom of God? Was not the

¹ "What is Christianity?" p. 8.

² John xx. 31.

Kingdom of God the sovereignty of God enthroned at the very centre of it, and was it not the mission of Jesus to kindle this life eternal in the souls of others ?

Christ's life was an entirely new thing in the earth. It was utterly given up to the love of God and men. At last, there appears among men One whose whole being goes out in love to God and in the pure service of His fellows ; the flood-gates of His soul are always open : He keeps nothing back. We only half understand this, because we have never felt so deeply ; we scarcely know what it is to be so consumed with interest in other people as to be oblivious of ourselves. " That which gives to the world," says Widgery, " its value and its final magnificence first comes to light in great human souls, and all the mountains and stars do not outweigh the greatness of a majestic life which sacrifices itself for the forlorn and the downcast."¹

Jesus lived constantly in this way, and He had the splendid faith to believe that His way of living would become dominant among mankind. It was His mission to cast the spell of this life upon the souls of others, and

¹ " Jesus in the Nineteenth Century and After," by Weinel and Widgery, p. 451.

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thus to create a society—a new order in the earth—in which this life would flourish. This was the Kingdom of God ; or, if we prefer the conception of St. John, this was “ life eternal.”

Our Lord then established a beloved community in the world, in the life of which the great commandment of love was to be enshrined. The late Professor Josiah Royce saw into the heart of things when he said that, to him, the genius of Christianity was to be found in its power to establish and foster a beloved community amongst men.

But is it not true that our Lord's mission was to save the souls of men ? Without doubt this is so. But what is salvation, if it be not the lifting of man, by divine power, into this fellowship of the life of God ? With this question of the Kingdom as salvation we shall be occupied in the next chapter. Meanwhile let the conclusion of this one be, that the mission of Jesus was not to proclaim the awful sovereignty of God, that would shortly break in upon this poor, misguided world, bring its confused drama to a close, and inaugurate with great power and glory a new and better æon ; but that it was to set up the realm of

God in the midst of human life, to bring men into the fellowship of the life that He Himself lived, and thus to create a community of beloved souls whose delight, like His own, would be to do the will of God on earth.

It is generally recognized, and therefore it need only be briefly noticed here, that the Kingdom of God in the mind of Christ is closely associated with *righteousness*.

It issues in righteousness. We are to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. vi. 33). Here, again, we find another well-known term filled with new and richer meaning by Jesus, and to understand that meaning we must view His teaching against the background of His life.

The righteousness which the Kingdom demands is much more than the legalistic righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. v. 20); it does not make any parade of itself (Matt. vi. 1); it is not that strict conformity to the law which a man must discipline himself to observe; but it is a passion of the soul, for the whole being of a man hungers and thirsts for it (Matt. v. 6), and is willing to suffer persecution for its sake (Matt. v. 10). Particularly is it not the

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righteousness of him whose demeanour suggests, more loudly than his speech, that his virtue is truly laudable ; but is rather joined with a real humility, scarcely conscious of itself, and with a hearty love of God and men.

“ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet peradventure for the good man, some would even dare to die ” (Rom. v. 7).

The righteousness of the Kingdom is very close to the attractive character of the latter, for the love of which some might even adventure their life.

It is one of the regrettable features of our human life throughout the ages, that so frequently righteousness is allowed gradually and almost insensibly to separate a man too sharply from the masses, who seem to think and care little about it ; but in Christ it went hand in hand with a warm human feeling, that gave Him hospitable entrance to the soul of the multitude, and, in the Cross, with all the rich offering of its wondrous life, we see it bound up with the unwearied and undaunted love of God. While recognizing this, however, we should clearly realize that strong emphasis must be laid on the *righteousness* of the Kingdom in these days, when there is a tendency on the part of

many to resolve the Christian religion simply into good-natured brotherliness, and the Kingdom of God into a scheme of social reconstruction under the influence of this kindly spirit. Christianity is truly a religion of love, but it is a love that is the twin flame of another, and that is the righteousness of God ; and it is this righteousness, conscious of the havoc wrought by sin, that makes this love stronger than death.

Some explanation is necessary of the omission of such important questions as the *Messianic consciousness* of Jesus, and His use of the title "Son of Man." These questions, especially in view of the recent eschatological emphasis upon them, are closely bound up with Christ's teaching on the Kingdom of God, and therefore ought to find a place in any treatment of this subject. The writer is quite convinced of this, and hastens to say that it is not any want of appreciation of their bearing on the Kingdom of God which is responsible for their omission here, but simply the fact that both these questions have been so exhaustively discussed by many able modern writers. So

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much has been published in recent years on the title "Son of Man," on its apocalyptic history, its Aramaic linguistic difficulties, its meaning in the mind of Christ, and its Messianic interpretation, that it would be superfluous to try to add to all this, unless one has some contribution of value to make. He wishes simply to suggest that the foregoing interpretation of the apocalyptic element in Christ's teaching may very well be applied, within limits, to the title "Son of Man."

It is generally agreed that the root of this expression is in Daniel vii. 13. But although the phrase in Daniel, "one like unto a son of man" (כְּבֶר אֱנוֹשׁ) refers to the humaneness and spirituality of the Kingdom of God, as contrasted with the violence and brutality of the kingdoms represented by the four beasts, and not directly to the Messiah, yet it distinctly refers to the Messiah as it is used in the Similitudes of Enoch, which were probably written in the early part of the first century B.C., and thus in our Lord's time had a Messianic significance.

We are thus faced with a position similar to that which confronted us in our study of the Kingdom of God. Our Lord again takes

an expression that was commonly used, just as He did in the case of the Kingdom of God, but we need not infer that He used it in a conventional sense. It is difficult to say just what that conventional meaning was; Harnack declares that in the minds of the people there was a "surging chaos of opposite feelings" in regard to this matter of the Messianic hope.¹ We may, however, say that the name Son of Man was generally interpreted eschatologically; but to say with J. Weiss and Schweitzer that the title on the lips of Jesus has therefore the "purely eschatological, transcendental significance,"² which it has in the Similitudes of Enoch and in Fourth Ezra, is to make small allowance for the new content which the rich inner experience of Jesus poured into the conventional words. Just as he invested the term "Kingdom of God," which was largely used eschatologically, with a *present* meaning, so He meant by the term "Son of Man" not the eschatological Messiah of Enoch and Fourth Ezra, but one who was *already* the Anointed of the Lord in the midst of men, with a message of present deliverance; and

¹ "What is Christianity?" pp. 138, 9.

² "Quest," p. 281.

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further, His association of this title and office with the Suffering Servant of the Lord in the later chapters of Isaiah, and particularly with the Cross, that He must soon bear (Mark viii. 31; ix. 12, 31; x. 33, 45, and parallels) show us how far He went beyond the prevailing eschatological meaning of the term, and how *new* was the content with which He enriched it.

It seems clear that Jesus used this title in a Messianic sense, but that sense was not that of popular apocalyptic literature, but was determined by His own vivid inner realization of His mission to establish the Kingdom in the souls of men. The evidence, of course, of His Messianic consciousness is not limited to passages embodying the title "Son of Man."

Worsley's view, in the writer's opinion, is commendable. He holds that if Christ had deliberately and publicly called Himself the Messiah earlier in His ministry He would never have been listened to.¹ Speaking of the title "Son of Man," he says: "We do not doubt that Jesus meant it as a Messianic title; but he coined a phrase which could not well be misinterpreted by His hearers on

¹ "Apocalypse of Jesus," p. 97.

account of any predilections on their part.¹
. . . No one could immediately saddle the phrase with any distinctive meaning."²
Winstanley has a very lengthy discussion of this whole subject in the third and fourth chapters of his book, "Jesus and the Future," pp. 93-205, in which he leans decidedly to the eschatological point of view, but links it with Christ's present unfathomable consciousness of Divine Sonship.

¹ "Apocalypse of Jesus," pp. 101-2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

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The following is a list of books that may be consulted respecting the Kingdom of God, and the Eschatological Question in the N.T.

Lewis A. Muirhead. *The Eschatology of Jesus* (see also Article on *Eschatology* in Hastings' "Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels.")

F. W. Worsley. *The Apocalypse of Jesus.*

C. W. Emmet. *The Eschatological Question in the Gospels.*

E. W. Winstanley. *Jesus and the Future.*

W. Manson. *Christ's View of the Kingdom of God.*

E. F. Scott. *The Kingdom and the Messiah.*

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CHAPTER III

CHRIST'S VIEW OF THE KINGDOM AS REDEMPTION AND ITS PLACE IN THE REST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

SOME will doubtless miss in the previous chapter that which, to their mind, lies at the very heart of the Christian faith. Is not the New Testament, they will say, from beginning to end a book of Redemption? Is not Christianity primarily a religion of *deliverance*, which claims to solve the problem of the sins of men? Does not this teaching of the Kingdom of God leave out of consideration the central doctrines in the Theology of Redemption such as the Atonement? What place, for instance, does it leave for the great New Testament conception of the *grace* of God? Such questions might very properly be asked. Christianity, without doubt, is a religion of supreme deliverance, and its doctrine of salvation burns like a beacon at its centre. Gilbert Chesterton, speaking of

the exhilaration of early Christianity, says in his characteristic way and with much insight: "The only fun of being a Christian was that a man was not left alone with the Inner Light, but definitely recognized an outer light, fair as the sun, clear as the moon, terrible as an army with banners"¹—which is to say, that Christianity lifted the eyes of men to a Power greater than their own in which there was deliverance.

All this may be at once admitted; but at the same time it should be clearly said that the doctrine of the Kingdom of God properly conceived and the Christian doctrine of individual salvation are at heart one and the same.

It is the easiest thing in the world to set the Synoptic Gospels over against, for example, the Epistle to the Romans, and to declare dogmatically that in doctrine they are poles asunder. It requires only a slender intelligence to notice the difference between the attractive ethics of the Sermon on the Mount and the heavier theological conceptions of St. Paul's greatest epistle; and one may be very easily led, by the very different terminology, to say, "Here, indeed, are two

¹ "Orthodoxy," p. 137.

realms of religious thought scarcely touching each other ! ” But the arresting feature of this situation is that, if one gives himself to the life portrayed in the Sermon on the Mount, he will find himself living the very life that is described in the twelfth chapter of Romans or in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Our Lord and St. Paul have really the same objective, and that is to lift men to that life of abounding love and inward righteousness, which they held to be the life of God within them.

It is a very superficial view of the Kingdom of God to imagine that it is only an attractive society or commonwealth, full of good-natured kindness that leads to social amelioration everywhere. It is very much more than this. Our Lord's idea of the Kingdom was that it came down upon men from above, powerfully, by an act of God. It was the potent entrance of God into the souls of men : He did not set it before His hearers merely as an idea, or, if you will, an ideal, which they might receive if they were in the mood to do so. He proclaimed it also as some mighty revolutionary power which came down upon men : “ Then is the Kingdom of God come *upon*

γού”¹ (ἄρα ἔφθασεν ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ). Manson, commenting upon this verse, says : “ Jesus regarded the new Powers thus liberated in Himself for the overcoming of physical and moral evil as a definite indication of a new ingress of God in human life.”²

Christ, then, did not regard His doctrine of the Kingdom merely as a religion of illumination ; He set it forth as a *reign of creative power* having behind it the untold energy of God.

The defect of that admirable book “ Ecce Homo ” is that it presents the Kingdom of God to us as a commonwealth built upon Christ’s ethical doctrine of love, but largely leaves out of account the power of God, which is to bring it into being within human society and sustain it there. The author fails to relate this adequately to the Christian idea of Redemption.

Are not these two ideas of the salvation of the individual and the fellowship of the community in God really parts of the same great New Testament conception of redemption ? Professor Adams Brown, in his

¹ Luke xi. 20.

² “ Christ’s View of the Kingdom of God,” p. 84.

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"Outline of Christian Theology," says: "Translated into the language of Christian Theology, this means that the Kingdom of God is the all-comprehending theological conception. God's relation to the individual is not something apart from His relation to the Christian community but is realized through it."¹ Again: "The salvation of the individual can never be divorced as an end in itself from the establishment of the Kingdom of God . . . a man is saved only as he becomes a member of that society."² This is very much the idea of Beyschlag, who says: "The dominion of God and communion with God coming down from heaven to earth is salvation; for wherever it is established in a heart, there heaven is on earth. It is God's gift, for it does not originate in a man's turning to God of himself, but in the eternal love conquering him and setting up its throne in him. But in doing that it establishes a Kingdom in him, a government of God and a heavenly commonwealth, which, in uniting him with the Father in Heaven, unites him also with all God's children."³

¹ "Christian Theology in Outline," p. 193.

² *Ibid.*, p. 193.

³ "New Testament Theology." E.T., Vol. I, pp. 54, 55.

Truly the salvation of the individual and the fellowship of the beloved community go hand in hand in the New Testament ; and it is because we have kept them too much apart in our thinking, and particularly in our life, that we have failed to set before the world a complete Christianity. The emphasis for several centuries has been more or less on the former. The Reformation made a notable contribution to religious thought, when in the face of an overbearing church it found the soul of religion in the individual's relationship to God ; but this in time hardened into a theology which, however worthy its stress upon the salvation of the individual, was too little concerned with the Kingdom of God as a reign of God in human society. Both Luther and Calvin held very spiritual views of the Kingdom of God, but interpreted it (this applies especially to Luther) chiefly as God's redeeming and sanctifying power *within the individual*.

Protestant theology generally up to fifty years ago, and later, focused its light upon the salvation of the individual soul, but did far less than justice to the sublime teaching of Jesus upon the Kingdom of God as a community of beloved souls on earth obedient

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to His rule. "Now theology," says Ritschl, "especially the Evangelical Confessions, has laid very useful emphasis on these two principal characteristics of Christianity. It makes everything which concerns the redemptive character of Christianity an object of the most solicitous reflection. Accordingly, it finds the central point of all Christian knowledge and practice in redemption through Christ, while injustice is done to the ethical interpretation of Christianity through the idea of the Kingdom of God. But Christianity, so to speak, resembles not a circle described from a single centre, but an eclipse which is determined by two *foci*"¹—the two foci, of course, being the redemption of the individual and the Kingdom of God.

In our time, however, this great religious idea is becoming central in Christian thought, and we are beginning to realize that it not only sheds light upon the question of our soul's redemption, but energizes us all to help to establish the City of God upon the shaken foundations of the world to-day.

If, then, we can come to recognize the intimate association of the idea of the Kingdom of God and Christian redemption, it will

¹ "Justification and Reconciliation." E.T., p. 11.

enable us more clearly to appreciate the place of the Kingdom in the rest of the New Testament, which is the purpose of this chapter.

Not only the words of Christ, but His demeanour all through life bear witness to the fact that He came to save men. "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."¹ "I am come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."² It is scarcely possible to say *when* in the consciousness of Christ this ministry of redemption became centred in His coming death. It is always hazardous to try to trace development in the consciousness of Jesus. Early in His public ministry it must have appeared strange to Him that the people generally did not willingly accept His wonderful Gospel of the Kingdom. In moments when we feel deeply or burn inwardly, or are elevated in soul by great ideas, we are apt to think that others share our emotion or aspiration, when we disclose it to them. The coldness of His contemporaries must, therefore, have been a problem to our Lord. He seems in the excuses of the Parable of

¹ Luke xix. 10.

² Luke v. 32.

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the Great Supper to be advancing a solution of this, and to find the ground of their indifference in their complete absorption in other things. Accordingly He must have known very early in His ministry that He must suffer, if He would carry His mission through. Throwing Himself into the midst of men He comes up against the inevitable fact of human *sin*. It is this and its issues which make His contemporaries blind to the vision of the highest in His teaching of the Kingdom; therefore, if ever the community of beloved souls with its holy fellowship is to be established in the earth, He must solve the problem of this desperate evil in men's hearts. The Kingdom will not come into their souls simply by the *proclamation* of it, but by some power great enough to dissolve their souls in penitence and to break the bonds of their iniquity.

It is true that He does not speak clearly to the disciples of His approaching death till after Peter's memorable confession at Cæsarea Philippi; but long before this the shadow of it must have been upon Him. At the very beginning of His ministry, at the Temptation, He deliberately chose the way of self-renunciation (the teaching of the

Sermon on the Mount shows that the life of the Kingdom of God is also in this self-denying love) ; and, further, before the confession at Cæsarea Philippi He referred to a baptism of suffering, and to the fact that He was straitened till it was accomplished (Luke xii. 50). But after the declaration at Cæsarea His words show plainly that He knows that He will save men by His death. Immediately after His rebuke of Peter He reminds them that the way of discipleship is the way of self-denial, and that to save their life they must lose it (Matt. xvi. 24, 25).

Still later He utters the memorable saying about giving His life a ransom (λύτρον) for many. This notable saying, which occurs in Matthew and Mark, but not in Luke, has been much discussed, and the word has been questioned on the ground of its theological flavour. "The Son of Man is come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, *and to give His life a ransom for many* (καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν)¹. Here is Jesus' idea of His ministry of redemption. What His preaching had not done, the outpouring of His life in sacrifice would accomplish.

Later on, again, at the Last Supper, we

¹ Matt. xx. 28, also Mark x. 45.

have the moving words concerning the broken body and the shed blood, found in all the Synoptics. "This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28) (περὶ πολλῶν, Matt.; ὑπὲρ πολλῶν, Mark xiv. 24). Matthew alone has εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. Luke has Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου, τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον.¹ Paul also in 1 Cor. xi. 25, has "the new covenant in my blood." The use of the word covenant, with its well-known Old Testament associations is very significant here. It has, of course, been questioned on the ground of its doctrinal significance, but the fact that all three Synoptists and St. Paul use it is very strong evidence indeed that our Lord said it.

Here, then, we are at the very heart of the Theology of redemption, but here, too, we are at the heart of the Kingdom of God. For what holier, what deeper manifestation of the life of the beloved community could we have than this scene in the upper room with the symbols of His coming sacrifice binding them all together in holiest fellowship? The bread is broken amongst them all; the cup, which

¹ Luke xxii. 20.

as He says the solemn words to them, has upon it the hue of sacrifice is passed and they all drink of it. It is, before everything else, a *holy fellowship*; it is a union of souls; it is the sacrificial treasure of one great sheltering soul poured richly into the souls of others; it is a community of God bound together by this great love even unto death—in a word, it is *the Kingdom of God*. One hesitates here to use the word “social,” which has so many meanings to-day—some of them not very admirable; but in its deepest and most spiritual sense does it not apply to this holy company at the Last Supper? Are we not realizing more and more to-day that the Atonement has a social aspect, which we have too long neglected? Professor Adams Brown, in his “Christian Theology in Outline,” speaking of the Atonement, says “The fundamental presupposition of the Christian idea of atonement is the unity of the human race. We have seen that it follows from the nature of the Christian ideal as social that the relation of the individual to God is realized in part through his relation to his fellowmen, but this means that mediation is not simply a device artificially introduced to remedy the evils caused by sin, but an abiding element

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in human life."¹ Later, he says: "The priestly work of Christ . . . cannot be completely understood without reference to the redeemed society in which it issues."²

One of Ritschl's conclusions is "the reconciliation of sinners by God, if it is to be conceived, is conceivable without inconsistency as a means used for the establishment of the Kingdom of God by God's love."³

Many of the ethical difficulties that we so keenly feel in the historical discussions on the Atonement are caused by the fact that men strive to state the problem from the Almighty's point of view, which, clearly, is beyond us. A statement of it from the point of view of the Kingdom of God in the redeemed community would, at any rate, have the merit of approaching the sacrifice of Christ from a spiritual position that we can feel and know.

It is clear, from history, that the Kingdom of God rises in men's souls at the Cross of Jesus. Jesus, by His endurance of the Cross, identified Himself with us in our sin and shame, in our blindness and misery, that we

¹ p. 365.

² p. 369.

³ "Justification and Reconciliation," p. 326.

might, by the leap of our faith to Him, become identified with Him in all the purity and passion of His love and in all the broad, divine unselfishness of His wondrous life. He was content to bear the one to achieve the other. If we ask *why* He must bear such a Cross, we shall find one answer, at least, in the heart of our own human life with its evil smiting its good, and by the hideous exposure of itself in the patient suffering of the good, dissolved with repentance, rising with strong desire towards the life that it has smitten. The ethical necessity of the Cross lies deep in our human life with its moral distinctions and issues, and, therefore, in the life of God the source of all our moral discernment.

The Cross of Jesus, therefore, is the affirmation of that fellowship into which God would bring us all. By the offering of its sacred life, by its broken body and shed blood, it affirms the great spiritual unity of men in God and with God, the fellowship of the community of all those who cleave to His love thus manifested wondrously ; and at the same time it affirms in a way that is beyond all speech, God's abhorrence of evil, which alone ruins this fellowship in human souls.

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The Cross of Jesus is the greatest affirmation in the New Testament of the Kingdom of God. It exhibits, in the highest form that we have ever seen, the Life and Love of the Kingdom offering the uttermost to restore men to the fellowship of God. In the sacrifice of Jesus, in the perfect unselfishness and magnanimity of it ; in the offering of One Who bore no resentment against those who drove Him to death, but rather went down into death for the sins of others, so that His spirit might rise victorious in a thousand hearts, we have the greatest manifestation of the Kingdom of God, the most potent entrance of the life of God into the soul of the race, that we have ever witnessed. Here, indeed, the beloved community finds its soul ; here is discovered the dynamic of all its future enterprise. The Cross of Christ, then, is the power of the Kingdom, and it is wrong to separate what God has thus joined together.¹

The Kingdom of God, accordingly, and the redemption of the individual are thus closely associated in the mind of Christ. He begins His public ministry by offering the Gospel of the Kingdom freely to all. This Kingdom

¹ NOTE.—The relation of the Kingdom to the Cross is discussed further in Chapter IX.

is the possession of any man through faith. But it becomes evident that before the reign of God can begin in the soul, before, indeed, it can be adequately appreciated and understood, the forgiveness of God must remove the barrier of evil ; and this work of grace the Cross of Jesus accomplishes.

Both these aspects of Christian doctrine come together into a unity in the life eternal, which we find in Christ. The Kingdom of God is the Divine dominion in the community of the faithful issuing in that life all throughout its fellowship ; the redemption of the individual is the lifting of any soul of man, through the mercy of God and the merits of Christ, into that same eternal life. So then we may go further than Ritschl, who declares that Christianity is an ellipse with two *foci*, and say that it is rather a circle with one centre, that centre being, to use again Harnack's phrase, " eternal life in the midst of time by the strength and under the eyes of God," and we shall find ourselves in agreement with the peerless author of the Fourth Gospel, who wrote all his marvellous chapters so that men might find this life (John xx. 31).

Is it not with most of us a matter of

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experience, that it is most difficult to persuade men to submit to the great ideal of the Kingdom simply by holding it before their eyes as an ideal? It fascinates like all things of ageless beauty and unfailing power, and, if the presentation of it lacks *dynamic*, the fault is with those whose eyes are so often holden from the vision of God. But it is also a fact of experience that nothing has more power to dissolve the hearts of men, and to set up the realm of God in their souls, giving them entrance in a supreme moment to that life, which filled the soul of Jesus, than His Cross.

I would here refer to the third section of Ritschl's conclusion of his chapter on "The Relations of Justification" in his book "Justification and Reconciliation." "Justification or reconciliation, as positively connected with the historical manifestation and activity of Christ, is related in the first instance to the whole of the religious community founded by Christ, which maintains the Gospel of God's grace in Christ as the direct means of its existence, *and to individuals only, as they attach themselves, by faith in the Gospel, to this community.*"¹

¹ "Justification and Reconciliation," p. 139.

(The italics are mine.) Again, part of the conclusion of the next chapter in the same book is that "Personal assurance, springing from justification, is experienced in and through trust in God . . . by Him who through faith in Christ incorporates himself into the community of believers."¹

All the foregoing arguments may help us to understand the place of the Kingdom of God in the rest of the New Testament.*

¹ "Justification and Reconciliation," p. 192.

* NOTE.—*The place of the kingdom in the rest of the New Testament.*

The place of the Kingdom of God in the Fourth Gospel and in the Book of Revelation will be discussed later on in this chapter. In the remaining books of the New Testament the term "Kingdom of God" rarely occurs. In the Acts of the Apostles reference is made to our Lord's "speaking the things concerning the Kingdom of God after His Resurrection" (i. 3), to the preaching of the Kingdom of God by Philip (viii. 12), by Paul and Barnabas in Asia Minor (xiv. 22), by Paul at Ephesus (xix. 8, xx. 25), and by Paul at Rome (xxviii. 23, 31).

St. Paul in his Epistles uses the term only a few times and mostly in a future sense; the only passages in which he refers to it in a present sense are Col. i. 13, where he speaks of the Father who "translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love"; Rom. xiv. 17, where he says that "the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost"; and, possibly, 1 Cor. iv. 20, in which he declares

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It has often been noted, as a remarkable fact, that the phrase " Kingdom of God," which is so frequent in the Synoptic Gospels, rarely occurs in the other books of the New Testament.

Several explanations have been given of this extraordinary fact. There are partial explanations such as one of the reasons Candlish advances, viz. that " the ideas of the Epistles are to a certain extent determined by the great controversies which the

that " the Kingdom of God is not in word but in power."

Elsewhere he speaks of it chiefly as future, e.g. passages in which he states that certain unrighteous people will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. vi. 9, Gal. v. 21, Eph. v. 5), that " flesh and blood " cannot inherit it (1 Cor. xv. 50). In 1 Cor. xv. 24 he speaks of the end in which the Kingdom will be delivered up to God ; and in 1 Thess. ii. 12, of God " Who calleth you into His own Kingdom and glory " ; in 2 Thess. i. 5, of those who " may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God " (the context here favours the future sense) ; in 2 Tim. iv. 1 he connects it with the " appearing " of Christ, and the sense is, therefore, future. In Col. iv. 11 he mentions his " fellow workers *unto* the Kingdom of God."

There are, however, other passages of St. Paul, in which the phrase Kingdom of God is not mentioned but which refer to the dominion of Jesus Christ, e.g. the great verses in Phil. ii. 9-11, which declare that every knee in heaven and earth shall bow in the name of

writers had to carry on in defence of the Gospel—Paul against Judaic legalism, and John against incipient Gnosticism.”¹ This, however, is by no means a sufficient reason for the absence of the terminology of so central and comprehensive an idea as the Kingdom was in the scheme of Christ’s thought.

It has been held that the expression does not occur because the writers of the Epistles

¹ “The Kingdom of God,” p. 185.

Jesus; and Eph. i. 20–23, in which Christ is said to have been raised to the right hand of God, and to have had all things put in subjection under His feet.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews the term “Kingdom” is once used (xii. 28): “Wherefore receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken let us have grace . . .”; but the figure of the City of God occurs here and there in the book, and there are passages which refer to the reign of Christ (i. 8, ii. 9).

In the Epistle of James there is only one reference to the Kingdom (ii. 5), where God is said to have chosen the poor to be “heirs of the Kingdom which He promised to them that love Him.” Here the sense is future.

In 1 Peter the term does not occur, but iii. 22 speaks of Christ being at the right hand of God and of angels, authorities and powers being subject to Him. 2 Peter i. 11 promises a rich entrance “into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” to the faithful; here a future Kingdom is evidently contemplated.

The phrase does not occur in Jude.

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have transcended the whole realm of Jewish ideas, to which the "Kingdom of God" historically belongs. They have taken the spiritual content of the conception, discarding the Jewish form, and have elaborated this content in a new and better set of ideas. This explanation seems to me to be far from the truth; it does far less than justice to the great spiritual meaning of the phrase in the mind of Jesus, which, as we have seen, went far beyond the bounds of Jewish thought in its universality and spirituality. There seems to be more truth in the contention that the writers of the Epistles, greatly enlightened though they were, failed to realize the breadth and depth of Christ's supreme idea of a realm of God set up on earth, where His will was to be done as it is done in heaven. Ritschl is doubtless nearer the mark when he says "This ruling idea of Jesus failed to maintain itself as central in the practical interest of the apostles."¹

Never, in fact, in all the centuries have men risen, either in thought or action, to the sublime height of the ideas of Christ. It

¹ "Justification and Reconciliation," p. 284 (see also Rauschenbusch's "Christianity and the Social Crisis," p. 93, for a stronger but too emphatic statement of this),

cannot be doubted that the members of the early church expected an almost immediate Parousia, which hope history did not fulfil. They must have thought that there was justification for this in the teaching of Christ. There must, indeed, have been sayings of His, which account for the prominence of this idea in their mind ; but in all probability, led by the prevailing apocalyptic hopes, which would be strengthened by persecution, they interpreted these sayings too literally and too much in the spirit of their Jewish heritage of ideas. If, as the thorough-going eschatologists say, Jesus really taught that the Parousia would occur as the spectacular end of the age within the life-time of His generation, then history has proved Him to be wrong. The point that needs emphasis is this, that He did not teach an immediate Parousia as the spectacular breaking in of God upon the course of the world, but that this idea was due to a misunderstanding of those sayings of His that are expressed in apocalyptic symbols. They were *symbols* to Him ; but, apparently, literal statements of immediately approaching *events* to some of His successors. Nevertheless, if we leave the matter here, we shall not be doing justice to

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the great teaching of the Epistles, so truly Christian in its essence.

If the two great features of Christ's teaching about the Kingdom are the reign of God on earth in the beloved community, and the redemption of the individual, then the Kingdom was undoubtedly realized in the *life* of the earliest Christians; for the Acts of the Apostles reveals to us a wonderfully spontaneous brotherliness in the earliest Christian community, whose enthusiasm and ardent sense of their enterprise in the earth is beyond all praise, and in whom there was a consciousness of their redemption, that burned in them like a flame. It has been suggested above (pages 96, 97) that although the terminology of the Epistles is "theological" and differs widely from that of our Lord, yet the life expressed in both is really the same.

I would venture the following as an explanation of the problem before us. We have seen that the redemption of the individual lies at the heart of the Kingdom, and that in the later days of His ministry Jesus spoke of this as being brought about by His death. The Apostolic Church fastened upon this great and welcome doctrine and elaborated it

in its theology, but did not realize *fully* the other essential element in the teaching of Christ on the Kingdom, viz. the establishment of a community of God in this present life widening to the bounds of earth, partly because of their literal apocalyptic interpretation of some of the *logia* of Jesus, and partly because of the collapsing world that they beheld on every side. The fall of Jerusalem is foretold ; they can see it coming in the gathering darkness ; and at last it crashes about their ears. They really have little hope of the present age ; the Roman Empire represents the strength and prowess of the world, and it tries to crush them in its iron hand ; but they believe that it is tottering to its fall and to its dissolution through the arrogance and nakedness of all its evil. They can see in many ways that civilization is breaking up round the basin of the Mediterranean ; and so they are not looking in the immediate future for a transformed world, for the present age is too hardened in its wickedness to be saved on any vast scale. Accordingly, they postpone the great day of God and its mighty events to the Parousia at the end of the present disordered æon.

We have, therefore, in the Apostolic age

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in place of the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, on the one hand the Church, that visible body that Jesus founded, standing for a present and a triumphant redemption in the midst of evil days, and, on the other, the Parousia representing the final triumph of Christ and the vindication of the faithful. There are, it is true, passages, such as the triumphant verses in Phil. ii. 9-11, which declare that Christ's dominion will one day extend all through the world, but they generally have a somewhat apocalyptic setting, e.g. in this passage we have "the things in heaven and the things under the earth."

To the early Christians "the day of the Lord" respecting individual salvation was certainly the present moment. "*Now* is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2); but in its relation to the broad fields of the world and to human society as a whole, the day of the Lord seems to have been by them largely postponed to the future with its glorious Parousia and its awful revelation of the power of God.

But, in the mind of Jesus, the day of the Lord for the whole spreading world was the present moment—in fact *any moment* in

which men might feel the glory of His reign in their souls and burn with holy desire to set up His Kingdom in all the earth. This is the great ideal of Jesus, which we have never yet grasped in all its fulness ; for it is much easier to believe that God will come in power and great glory in the future, than to believe that He comes in power and great glory to us here and now in this throbbing moment, which alone is ours. It takes greater faith to believe that God is really here in all His power, that the very place whereon we stand is His habitation, and that the moment which is now passing is a moment in eternal life. There is an almost incurable tendency in us to look for romance in distant things, and to despise the things at our feet. Over the rim of the world, we think, lie the Isles of Enchantment ; away yonder on Sirius or Canopus is to be found the grandeur and witchery of the cosmos ; whereas the place of enchantment, had we only eyes to see, is all about us, and our planet, if we are to believe Alfred Russell Wallace, is probably somewhere near the centre of the stellar universe.

The question of the Church and the Kingdom will be discussed later on, but it may here be said that St. Paul, in his doctrine of

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the Church, approximates very closely to our Lord's teaching of a present Kingdom of God. The life of faith, love and righteousness is the same, the spirit manifested so admirably by the Apostle himself and fostered by him in all the churches under his care, is the same, the chief difference being that our Lord's conception is wider and more far-reaching, and has not the limitations which the Church as a visible organized society must necessarily have. It is only just to the great Apostle to say that, if our Lord's doctrine of the Kingdom be found in his epistle as a twofold conception—the Church its present, visible manifestation, and the Parousia its future and final triumph—he by no means leaves to the future the realization and development of that life of God, which filled the soul of Jesus. This he brought mightily into the present moment as the essence of the Church's being; and it did not suffer at all when his views on the Parousia in later life became modified and he ceased to believe that he would live to see that consummation. No man can justly charge St. Paul, as so many in our time might rightly be charged, with being so absorbed in the future Parousia as to overlook the splendour of the opportunities and

the call of the duties of the present. Although St. Paul does not frequently use the term "Kingdom of God," yet his conception of the Christian life harmonizes with the idea of the Kingdom as present. He sets forth unmistakably the new life which we have in Christ—"Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27). "When Christ, Who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory" (Col. iii. 4).¹ This corresponds closely to that which we have seen to be the essence of the Kingdom of God, which is the reign of God in us, or in other words, the life of Christ triumphant in the soul.

We have yet to say something upon the Johannine interpretation of the Kingdom of God. Although the expression "Kingdom of God" occurs only in the third chapter of the Fourth Gospel (for the term used in xviii. 36 is "My Kingdom"); yet the Johannine interpretation of the idea is most illuminating and, I venture to think, justifies the view which is being advocated in these pages.

Instead of "Kingdom of God" we find throughout this Gospel the term "eternal

¹ See also Gal. ii. 20.

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life" used in the sense of the present possession of those who have faith in Christ—"that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life" (John iii. 15).¹ In the striking passages in the fifth chapter (verses 24-26) he speaks of those who believe "having passed from death into life," and declares that the hour is *now*, when the dead shall hear His voice and live. Christ speaks of Himself as being the Resurrection and the Life, and that all who believe in Him shall never die (John xi. 25, 26), and in the well-known passage in the High-Priestly prayer He says, "And this is life eternal that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John xvii. 3).

Now the term "life" is sometimes used in the Synoptics as equivalent to the Kingdom of God, e.g. "If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix. 17). This is especially evident when it is read in the light of verses 23-24 of the same chapter, where "the Kingdom of God" is used. There is also the arresting use of these two terms in Mark ix., where "life" in verses 43 and 45 passes into "Kingdom of God" in

¹ See also John iii. 16 and vi. 47.

verse 47, showing that the terms were, on this occasion, used synonymously by Jesus. The meaning of the two cannot be different because the first two verses refer to entering into "life" minus a hand or a foot, and verse 47 to entering the "Kingdom of God" minus an eye, and here in the passage referring to the eye, Matthew has the word "life" (Matt. xviii. 9).

Yet St. John's use of "eternal life" is new in the great emphasis which he lays upon the fact that it fills the soul *now*. He uses it also in a future sense (John vi. 27 ; xii. 25, also in the opening verses of chapter xiv. on the Father's house with its many abiding places) ; but his distinctive use of it is in its *present* meaning.

The Christian world has by no means made up its mind as to the origin and sources of this great Johannine contribution to the New Testament, and the literature upon it grows enormously. It is generally dated about A.D. 90, or perhaps a decade later, and it is held to have had an Ephesian origin ; but the Christian world has its mind made up as to the untold spiritual value of this great mystic interpretation of our Lord's life and teaching. The longer and the richer

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our experience of Christianity becomes, the more do we turn to the words of St. John, and find in them the expression of all that is deepest within us.

How, then, are we to explain this interpretation of the Kingdom of God? It has been explained in the following way: that St. John, having seen the fall of Jerusalem, realized that the Jewish Messianic hope, as expressed in the doctrine of the Kingdom, would never be fulfilled; he therefore believed that he was true to the essence of Christ's teaching "when in his Gospel the outward vision of triumphant dominion is transformed into the inward vision of divine indwelling and communion consequent on sacramental and spiritual re-birth."¹

Probably it is true to say that the ruin of Jerusalem and the collapse of apocalyptic hopes were a factor in the development of John's thought, just as the philosophical conceptions which he met with in Ephesus were another factor; but the secret of his discovery, doubtless, lay in the long brooding of his mystic mind upon the words of Jesus. It was given to him to see that the too literal interpretation of the apocalyptic parts of

¹ "Jesus and the Future," by Winstanley, p. 333.

Christ's teaching was a mistake ; it was an error, not only because it had not been fulfilled in history, but chiefly because it did not agree with the genius of Jesus ; that genius was to give life to the world—life in the present moment. Hence St. John in his immortal Prologue carries the being of Jesus back to the beginning of all things when God alone existed, and in a few lines he breaks upon us with probably the greatest thing that has ever been said about Jesus by mortal man : “ *In Him was life and the life was the light of men.* ” Again in his first Epistle he says with a world of meaning, “ and the life was manifested and we have seen and bear witness and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.”¹

Now this teaching on “ eternal life ” is the supreme message of the New Testament, and, communicated to our souls through faith, is the essence of the doctrine of the Kingdom of God. We have endeavoured to make it clear that the deepest thing in the life of Jesus was His vivid consciousness of the life of God, which was like a full tide of the Eternal in His soul, and that the reign of

¹ 1 John i. 2,

God was the dominion of this life in other souls, and its realization in the Christian community. This is exactly what St. John teaches all through his Gospels and Epistles. He is so conscious of this reign of love and its consequent fellowship in a community of God, that he says with amazing simplicity and truth, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."¹ This first Epistle of St. John is simply steeped in the spirit of the beloved community, even though the term "Kingdom of God" is not mentioned in it.

It seems very strange indeed that St. John did not make the relationship of all this to the Kingdom clearer by habitually using the expression "Kingdom of God." One might suggest that he omitted the term because its Jewish history and general apocalyptic interpretation was not acceptable to his philosophical contemporaries at Ephesus; or that he gave it up because it had been so misinterpreted by others, who failed to see in its Jewish form a new world of Christian meaning. But this, after all, is far from satisfactory; for one feels that St. John might so ably and profitably have rehabilitated this great

¹ 1 John iii. 14.

conception of his Master by unfolding explicitly the wealth of spiritual meaning which lay at its heart, and which had not been fully apprehended.

We must now turn to the conception of the Kingdom of God in the Book of Revelation, upon which there is such a voluminous literature, which has just been enriched by the appearance of Dr. Charles's scholarly Commentary.¹

It is indeed a far cry from the Johannine mysticism, and the idea of a present eternal life of the Fourth Gospel, to the highly-coloured symbolism and apocalyptic visions of the Book of Revelation. We come to the book of an author, John by name, whose Greek style, theological viewpoint and general outlook on the world are entirely different from those of the author of the Fourth Gospel. It is well known that the Greek of the Apocalypse is extraordinary in its apparent defiance of Greek constructions, or, perhaps we should say, in its desire to have its own cheerful way in matters of syntax, etc. Dr. Charles says that it is Hebraic Greek, due to the fact that the author thought in Hebrew

¹ "International Critical Commentary" (2 Vols.).

but wrote in Greek.¹ The late Dr. J. H. Moulton, while recognizing the distinct Hebrew element, agrees with Dean Armitage Robinson in thinking that his Greek "was more like the Greek of the Egyptian papyri and of inscriptions found in various parts of the Græco-Roman world."²

Whether or not the author's style be Hebraic, his *thought* certainly is influenced by Jewish conceptions. We have in this remarkable book a profusion of the recognized symbols, metaphors and highly-coloured allegories of Jewish Apocalyptic literature; here are all the striking features of its apocalyptic hope, with its catastrophic events following one another in swift and fearful succession, as they move towards the *dénouement* of the history of the world. A knowledge of this literature generally, without doubt, is necessary to the understanding of the book.

Yet to say it is *merely* Jewish, and not to recognize the great challenge of the New Testament ringing through all its chapters, and the Christian hope shining behind all

¹ "Studies in the Apocalypse," p. 82.

² "A Grammar of New Testament Greek." Vol. II, Part I, pp. 33-34.

its confusion of metaphors, is to be blind to one of the greatest religious books of history.

Now the Kingdom of God may be held to be the ruling conception of the Book of Revelation. In it we find this Kingdom and the realm of evil, with all its powers, opposed to one another; the conflict goes on all through the days when "Babylon the Great" (the Roman Empire), "the Mother of the Harlots and the abominations of the earth" (xvii. 5) persecutes the faithful until she becomes "drunk with the blood of the saints." But towards the end it is clearly seen who is winning in the struggle; the power of the Almighty avenges the martyrs and strikes to earth, and to a well-merited doom, the monster of evil. The rider on the white horse, with eyes of flame and a sharp sword proceeding from his mouth, appears (xix. 11-16) and smites the evil nations; the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire (xix. 20) and their armies slain with the sword of the rider of the white steed (xix. 21); then follow the binding of Satan and his doom, the Millennium, the loosing of Satan for a little time, the judgment of the Great White Throne, and the appearance of

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the new heavens and the new earth (chapters xx.-xxi.).

Across all these dramatic scenes, with their strange imagery, might be written the words "And of His Kingdom there shall be no end."¹

The word "Kingdom" is used many times. "He made us to be a Kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father (i. 6; see also v. 10). The seer of Patmos is "your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus" (i. 9). Unto God is ascribed "the blessing, and the honour and the glory and the *dominion* (τὸ κράτος) for ever and ever" (v. 13). Later on there are the triumphant words, "The Kingdom of the world is become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever" (xi. 15). God is thanked because He has taken His great power and did reign (xi. 17). The great voice from heaven says, "Now is come the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority (ἐξουσία) of His Christ" (xii. 10).

Now, without doubt, we have here the apocalyptic view of the Kingdom of God.

¹ Luke i. 33.

The writer doubtless has incorporated in his book a great deal of matter from Jewish apocalypses, but has given it a distinctively Christian setting. He believed in the almost immediate return of Christ, in the approaching end of the world, and in the spectacular appearance of God in fearful judgment and glorious vindication of the righteous just before that consummation.

He did not see down the ages to our time and beyond it; his view of life is largely determined by the dismaying events of the first Christian century, particularly by the cruel persecutions of the Roman Empire, and the whole setting of the book belongs to the past.

But when we have said that his view was that of a Christian apocalyptist, strongly under Jewish influences toward the end of the first century (*c.* 80 or 90 A.D.), and that his idea of the Kingdom of God was conventionally eschatological, have we done justice to this great and noble book? Is it not possible to see in it, notwithstanding all its weird imagery, the great hope of Christ's own teaching? Is it not a tremendous pity that we have largely left the book to extremists? We have allowed it to be the

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happy hunting-ground of those who have a far keener interest in the end of the world than they have in its present progress and the establishment therein of the City of God. It is most regrettable that so many, who have scarcely any enthusiasm for the social or intellectual development of the race, who have quite made up their mind that the world will go from bad to worse, and who generally take an other-worldly view of the Christian hope, should have almost a monopoly of this book, and should go for justification of their views to its chapters, which really have a rousing message for modern society, and could be the inspiration of all who labour heartily in the broad areas of the Kingdom of God on earth. These latter folk, unfortunately, are often the very people who imagine that the Book of Revelation contains no particular message for them.

We have allowed men too lightly to say that they prefer the simple teaching on the life of love in the Epistles of St. John, which lie just before it in the New Testament, to the riot of Jewish imagination in the Book of Revelation, and therefore to neglect this truly great piece of Christian literature.

We ought now to know enough of Jewish

Apocalyptic literature to be able to see the great spiritual meaning of the Book of Revelation as it flashes upon the problems of our modern world. The seer John is an exile in Patmos, the whole cruel and evil world is hurling itself upon his beloved Church, which seems to most to be staggering like a broken thing, that must soon totter to its fall. He cannot lift a finger to help them ; his lofty spirit must burn itself out there in the little isle of banishment surrounded by its imprisoning seas, and he must be content to see his loved Church wasted with fire and sword—the sport of the monster of wickedness. But no ! a new spirit awakes within him. There is something, at least, that he can do. He can lift up his clear eyes, and see who is really winning in this decisive and terrible struggle. Therefore, like all true apocalyptists, he lifts up his eyes and sees, not pretentious Rome proudly spreading herself to the ends of the earth, but the triumphant Christ with eyes of flame and with the light of victory on His face, set there on high for His people's deliverance, holding in His hand the keys of life and of death, and declaring with the voice of many waters that He is alive for

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evermore. This, then, the imprisoned seer could do—he could write this signal message of deliverance and hope in a book, and send it to the suffering Churches ; he must write it in symbols, so that its message would be veiled from the cruel eyes that might inspect it, but clear to the devoted eyes of the faithful. The inspiring message of the Book of Revelation is that the Kingdom of God is winning all the time, could we only see it, and must triumph in the end ; and this ringing message we sorely need in our time, when a bewildered world, smarting under the suffering of the recent unparalleled conflict, and conscious that it has blundered terribly, angrily and scornfully challenges the Church to point the way out of the present confusion.

Have we not imagination enough to see in the symbols, which belong to the first Christian century and which expressed an apocalyptic hope that was not fulfilled, the imperishable hope of Christianity—that victory always belongs to those who have faith in God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and that His Kingdom is ever widening unto the perfect day ?

The meaning of this great book for us

to-day is not in the strict interpretation of its Jewish allegories, which set forth an almost immediate consummation of the age—"things which must shortly come to pass" (i. 1), which history has not fulfilled; but it is in the great religious idea, that those who trust in God through Christ belong to an eternal order which must be victorious in the end. In this way the book may be connected with Christ's teaching on the Kingdom *as a reign of God in the souls of men, binding them into a blessed community of the redeemed, the issues of whose life are triumphant and eternal.*

Dr. Charles finely says, "The author of this great book has, despite the burden of an all but overwhelming tradition and the use of a style which sets every canon of correct writing at defiance, but which, nevertheless, observes laws of its own, bequeathed to mankind a κτήμα ἐς αἰεί—an imperishable possession, the true worth of which lies in the splendid energy of its faith, in the unfaltering certainty that God's own cause is at issue now and here and must ultimately prevail, and that the cause of Jesus Christ is inseparably linked therewith, and the main aim of which, as is clear from every page,

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is to emphasize the overwhelming worth of things spiritual as contrasted with things material, and in the next place to glorify martyrdom, to encourage the faithful to face death with constancy, nay, more, with rapturous joy."¹

It is not, then, accurate to say that the conception of the Kingdom of God fills the Synoptic Gospels, and then disappears from the rest of the New Testament. It is in the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles under different terminology; is closely associated implicitly in the Epistles with the Church and its great message of human redemption; and, although it appears in other sections in a strict apocalyptic setting, it is still not without those features that inspire us to establish, by Divine help, a City of God on earth to-day.

¹ "Studies in the Apocalypse," p. 78.

CHAPTER IV

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND FAITH

THE discussion of the Kingdom of God and faith has been reserved for a separate chapter, because of the arresting association of the two ideas in the New Testament, and because in our conception of the Kingdom, as a great cause of God and humanity, we do not always appreciate the place that faith should occupy. Later on, in dealing with the question of the realization of the Kingdom on earth, we shall have to endeavour to indicate its application to the social life of mankind; and the peril of all such applications of the Kingdom is, that many will think that it is simply a scheme of social reconstruction, from which wholly inadequate interpretation we shall be saved, if we give their due and original weight to such New Testament factors as faith and the power of God. This chapter, accordingly, has a distinct bearing on the later sections of this book.

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Faith occupies throughout the New Testament a remarkable place ; and there are few of the great New Testament terms that have been so often misunderstood. It has often been set over against the *reason* of man, and it has been suggested that we receive by faith what we cannot reach by the intellect—the implication being that these two powers of our nature do not go hand in hand ; whereas they certainly are bound up together, there being in faith a distinct intellectual basis. Again, faith has been associated with various forms of the craving for the miraculous, and, unfortunately, with a regrettable disparagement of those branches of science, which patient research has brought into being for the relief of suffering and the cure of disease.

What is the significance of faith in the New Testament ? We can gain comparatively little by an examination of the term or family of terms in the original. Lightfoot has an able section on the meaning of *πίστις* in the Old and New Testaments in his "Commentary on Galatians."¹

"There is in biblical Hebrew no corresponding substantive for faith, the active principle. Its nearest representative is

¹ "Commentary on Galatians," pp. 154-158.

אֱמוּנָה, 'firmness, constancy, trustworthiness.'"¹ "In the Old Testament, there being no Hebrew equivalent to the active meaning, πίστις has always the passive sense, 'fidelity,' 'constancy,' unless the passage in Habakkuk² be regarded as an exception." Lightfoot goes on to say that, although in the New Testament πίστις is found both in its active and its passive sense, the active meaning predominates and is characteristic of the New Testament all through.³

But we here find ourselves in the same difficulty, which faced us in our examination of the term "Kingdom of God"—the idea is too spacious to be compressed into any terms; consequently we must endeavour to gain some knowledge of the vast content that Christ and the writers of the New Testament poured into the familiar word.

The beliefs and convictions of great souls appear in their demeanour. Our Lord's demeanour discloses to us the fact that He regarded faith as one of the profoundest powers of the human soul. When He met

¹ "Commentary on Galatians," p. 155.

² Hab. ii. 4.

³ p. 157.

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with it, He did not disguise the wonder and the pleasure that He felt. He must have known the true value of all the great human powers, because His own nature was so marvellously endowed ; but He selects faith for special commendation and links it with His Gospel of the Kingdom.

We have all noticed this striking feature in the Gospels—that it was apparently easy for Him to help people who believed in Him, and difficult for Him to assist those who would not thus give Him the open *sesame* to their souls. “ And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief ” (Matt. xiii. 58) ; the parallel passage in Mark suggests that He *could do* no mighty work because of their want of faith ; the idea is not that He was offended and left them to their own resources, but that their unbelief was a real barrier to His power. Sometimes when asked to heal a person He would say, “ Do you believe that I can do this ? ” And, again, after His touch had brought relief He would add, “ It is your faith that has made this possible.” To the disciples, perplexed at their own want of power, He replies in a striking utterance

that, if they had any faith at all, they could remove the mountains of difficulty which loomed up before them.

All this is no doubt in accordance with laws of the spiritual world, that we but dimly understand. So then, in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus sets forth the greater life, which He had come to bring, as becoming the possession of men through faith ; and it is here that this power is closely associated with the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom was to Him the reign of God in human souls, and this was set up in the soul, which through faith threw open its portals to the incoming Power.

All this finds confirmation and further development in the Fourth Gospel, which in many of its chapters assures us that we enter into life through faith. " He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life " (iii. 36, also vi. 40, 47) ; " This is the work of God that ye *believe* on Him whom He hath sent " (vi. 29). This luminous, mystical interpretation of our Lord's message suggests that faith is the power by which we lay hold of eternal life, which is St. John's way of saying that by faith we enter into the Kingdom of God.

The rest of the New Testament confirms this view. The Epistles consistently regard faith as the *sine qua non* of the Christian life, as the power in us, by which we get into touch with a world of blessedness and power, and receive its fullness into our souls.

How, then, can we come to see that this is all eminently reasonable, and how can we link it up with our modern view of the spiritual world? We are all familiar with a mental disposition to-day which would rule out rather impatiently the idea of faith as it applies, at any rate, to the Kingdom of God in society; it holds that faith has a place in one's personal spiritual aspirations, but that the Kingdom of God is a great religious cause, set clearly in the open spaces of the world, the banners of which are spread before the eyes of every man, and that anyone may step beneath them to offer his help without this element of "faith" coming prominently into the matter at all. Those who regard the Kingdom as applying chiefly to social problems would be inclined to take this view. But we cannot in this summary fashion rule out a great New Testament conception. We must concern ourselves not with our own

particular ideas of the Kingdom, but with the New Testament idea of it, especially with our Lord's conception of it ; and, as we find faith fundamental to this, we must give it an essential place in the life of the Kingdom to-day.

There are many analogies that throw light on this most interesting question. A child comes into a world which is not empty, but full of the beauty of God ; he creates none of it, but his body is so designed that there are sensitive points at which he can get into touch with it. His eyes are sensitive to light and so become gateways through which the world of beauty streams into his mind and takes possession of it. His business in life is to learn to keep the portals open, and to interpret rightly the incoming message of the world. An artist is able to open his eyes more widely than others—which is to say that his vision and all the cerebral and mental power at the back of it are keener than that of others. The point is this—the beauty or, at any rate, not to offend the strict philosophers, that which brings it into being, is *there*, it awaits the coming of anyone who can receive it and interpret it.

Now we are set also in the midst of other surroundings than the world which knocks at the door of our senses. We are in the midst of the world of spirit, with its subtle and yet tremendous forces ; and the Being of God with His outstreaming Power is the centre of this world. It is all beyond our senses ; but the whole religious history of the world declares that it is not quite beyond *us*. Is there not, therefore, something within the human soul that is sensitive to the touch of God, as the eye and its hinterland are to the touch of light ? The analogy, I know, is imperfect and incomplete ; but it matters not whether we call this sensitiveness of the soul a disposition, or a power, or simply the response of our spirit *qua* spirit to God—the sensitiveness is there, and it is this “ power ” *in action*, that Christianity calls faith. Faith is more than our sensitiveness to God ; it is the whole active response of the soul to His touch ; it is that within us which lays hold of the Divine. From another point of view it may be described as a magnetic state of the soul, towards which the power of the world of spirit tends to stream. It is not unreasonable to believe that there is a disposition of the soul—a state of mind that is

favourable to an ingress of God's power ; and that, where this is absent, there is a hindrance to its realization. No sensible person, of course, believes that the will of God is at all arbitrary or capricious. We shun the thought that He responds to faith because He is gratified by it. In all probability He responds to faith because of the constitution of the world of spirit ; because of some fundamental law of it, that we very imperfectly grasp. If all this be somewhere near the truth, it may serve to make the reasonableness of the New Testament doctrine of faith somewhat clearer.

Jesus, truly, did set the Kingdom of God before us as a great *cause*—as a reign of God bringing with it into the souls of men fulness of life—bringing with it, indeed, eternal life. This life, He taught, comes into the souls of men by the power of God. But into whose souls ? Not into the souls of those who are arbitrarily chosen, but into those whose faith makes them capable of receiving it, into those whose disposition sets an open flood-gate before this incoming tide of life. Is not this why Christ, all through His life, manifested such an anxiety to meet with people

who believed in Him, who had this state of mind favourable to the outgoing of His power to them ?

Our life on its psychical side is full of phenomena that cast light on this disposition of soul ; we know how easy it is to influence people, whose minds present no barrier, but rather an open avenue to that which goes out from us to them.

But, it will be objected, whether all this be true or not, what has it to do with the Kingdom of God as a world ideal to-day. Its bearing is upon the realm of the individual soul. What has it to do with the Kingdom as the great spiritual adventure of the Church ?

It may be first of all replied, that it is impossible to separate these two aspects of the Kingdom, for they are really one. It begins in individual souls, and it issues in a society, and, therefore, in the reconstruction of human society generally. But is it not possible to find a very real place for faith in the great cause of the Kingdom which has caught the eye of the modern Christian world ?

It ought to be distinctly understood that the Kingdom of God, which is now claiming

the attention of Christendom, is not simply a large attractive programme of world improvement, carried on in the name of religion, which has the fascination of all great human ventures, and which a man may assist when he feels so inclined. If this were so, all the faith that one would need would be a general confidence in the reasonableness and efficacy of the project. The Kingdom, on the other hand, if we are to be true to its setting in the New Testament, is not purely our affair, it is the Kingdom *of God*; its interests are the interests of the Eternal; its power, though realized largely by human effort, does not primarily reside in this, but in God; and it is our high privilege to set our hands to this great cause, which did not originate in our souls, and which cannot triumph by our moral and spiritual enthusiasm alone.

The realization of the Kingdom of God is the objective of the Christian religion, and that religion is primarily a religion of *deliverance*; therefore there is in it the lift of a Power, that is greater than ourselves. Here, then, is where faith comes in. No man can work intelligently and successfully in the Kingdom of God, who does not understand it,

who does not feel that the dynamic of it is not human ingenuity but the power of God uprising in human souls. To this power He links Himself by faith. Faith, therefore, in the Kingdom is not simply our confidence in its greatness and efficacy as a sublime cause, it is that disposition of soul by which we lay hold of the Power that is behind it and in it all. An illustration may make this clear. The Kingdom to-day has a very direct incidence upon social life and its many problems. Many will believe in it, because of its breadth of interest—because it attaches the interest of the religious world to the social question ; others will believe in it, because it attempts to solve the social problem from within, i.e. by touching the spirit of man ; but he who will realize the social power of the Kingdom most, is he who believes that it is not simply a scheme of social amelioration, but that it is the potent entrance of God into human society, and that his chief business is to attach himself, and all his social enthusiasm and ideas, to that great Power, which moves at the heart of it.

The faith of a Christian merchant in the Kingdom of God is not in the idea that it would be a delightful thing

to see more brotherliness in the market-place, or even in his confidence that this highly desirable state of things will come about; but is to be seen in the way in which he throws open his life to this new incoming power, which he believes will ultimately rehabilitate commerce. His faith is in the open avenue that his soul provides for the good Spirit of God to enter the area of economic life, and to touch it at its heart with the potent influence of the Christian religion.

In this way a man responds to the New Testament ideal of the Kingdom in the realm of the modern world, and in this way he will best do justice to it as a *religious* conception, for it is the office of religion to lift our vision to that Power, which though vastly greater than our own, is available here and now for our most urgent needs.

This conception of the Kingdom by no means removes it from human enterprise. "Is not the message of the Kingdom supernatural through and through?" says Professor A. G. Hogg.¹ "Yes," we may reply, "but you must allow us to interpret the word and

¹ "Christ's Message of the Kingdom," p. 166.

to show its implications." We are rather impatient of the word "supernatural" to-day, largely because it has been abused by those who have divorced it sharply from nature as we know it. The tendency of modern Christian thought is to lift the "natural" towards it.¹ If by the declaration that the Kingdom of God is supernatural it is meant that its power is of God Who transcends the world, we shall heartily agree; but this power is exercised through man—these two realms meet in the soul of man and thus the City of God rises amid the scenes of earth.

There is one other aspect of the New Testament doctrine of faith, which has a distinct bearing on the Kingdom of God. The New Testament consistently presents to us the need of faith in Christ's Cross. With one voice it declares that men are lifted into this great life of God, which is the life of the Kingdom, through the Cross of Jesus, and this happens when all our being goes out in a supreme act of faith to that almost irresistible appeal. In an illuminating chapter on the Cross, Dr. W. M. Macgregor says:

¹ But see Note, pp. 69-70, "Christ's Message of the Kingdom."

“The great Christian transformations are wrought in those who first see Jesus associating Himself with them, and who then, in one high act of faith, are able to associate themselves with Him, making His confession theirs, and His hope theirs, and His victory theirs.”¹

The Kingdom might have been brought to a more perfect world simply by the attractive proclamation of its high ideal, but not to ours. A race like ours, with its history and civilization dark with evil, is not so easily and comfortably saved. For our sakes, and for the Kingdom's sake, Christ treads the path which all the moral tragedy of the world, set over against the life of God, calls upon Him to take: and the life of the Kingdom rises in the souls of men in the presence of this great sacrifice.

It is even so to-day; the cause of God calls to our eager hearts, and shines upon all the highways of our life; but we know that he who would obey the call must out of a cheerful heart, and for the love of the ways of God be prepared to offer the best that he has. It is the faith that rises at the

¹ “Christ and Human Need,” p. 182. (Report of Glasgow Conference.)

Cross, and through which we enter its rich life of offering, that must still be one of the greatest factors in the progress of the Kingdom to-day.

CHAPTER V

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM AND THEIR HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

MANY worthy but unsatisfying chapters have been written on the Church and the Kingdom. These two conceptions have been defined in a bewildering variety of ways, and declared to be different or identical according to each writer's view-point. We have been treated to lengthy discussions on the Church visible and invisible, and their relation to the Kingdom, until we grow weary of the subject and impatient with the defining habit altogether.

The greatest things in life, of course, cannot be satisfyingly defined. It is, therefore, I suppose, impossible to give a really adequate definition of the great idea of the Kingdom, which our Lord used in more ways than one. The late Dr. Sanday thought the best definition of the Kingdom of God was one framed

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by Dr. Hort, viz. : " The world of invisible laws by which God was ruling and blessing His creatures." ¹ This definition, however, would probably be far too abstract to satisfy most of us, and certainly much too abstract ever to bring any great dynamic to bear upon Christian enterprise. There must be for us, as there was for Christ, a religious imperative in this idea of the Kingdom ; it must embody for us a reign of creative power, which will be the *élan de vie* of all our Christian adventure.

The Church and the Kingdom have generally been differentiated, except by those, especially, who, led by Augustine, have identified the Kingdom with the visible, organized Catholic Church of God. A good deal of the argument is not convincing. What, for instance, are we to make of Ritschl's statement that the Church is a religious idea, and the Kingdom is a moral one ? Such a distinction only confuses the issue ; for the Kingdom of God is pre-eminently a *religious* idea ; its religious and moral elements are, of course, bound up

¹ Article, " Jesus Christ," in Hasting's " Dictionary of the Bible," Vol. II, p. 619.

together and ought never to be separated. Ritschl himself, in fact, does not hold consistently to the distinction, for he says, "The Kingdom of God likewise is a directly religious conception. This is clear when we consider the phrase as it stood originally—'Sovereignty of God.'"¹ A fuller and a much more lucid statement of Ritschl's position is to be found in the following passage: "Those who believe in Christ, therefore, constitute a Church, in so far as they express in prayer their faith in God the Father, or present themselves to God as men who through Christ are well pleasing to Him. The same believers in Christ constitute the Kingdom of God in so far as, forgetting distinctions of sex, rank or nationality, they act reciprocally from love, and thus call into existence that fellowship of moral disposition and moral blessings which extends, through all possible gradations, to the limits of the human race."²

Here, however, the distinction seems to be rather too fine. Does not the second part of this section apply also to members of the

¹ "Justification and Reconciliation," p. 30.

² *Ibid.*, p. 285.

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Christian Church? Further, is it strictly accurate to say that the Kingdom of God is *a society*? It must be admitted that a definition setting it forth as such has been quoted with appreciation on a previous page. It inevitably creates a society and is realized therein; but it is strictly the reign of God within that society. For all practical purposes we speak of it as a society, but it is really much more than this: it also includes the whole impact of God's life and power upon that society; it is the dominion of God in human hearts.

The Kingdom of God, then, is a wider conception than that of the Church, which is a visible, organized body of believers, designed to be the instrument in God's hands of the realization of the Kingdom on earth. Professor D. S. Cairns says: "The Church is a visible community of professing Christians founded by Our Lord for the propaganda of the Kingdom, and by virtue of its visibility it is subject to limitations from which the Kingdom is free."¹

It may be doubted whether it is accurate

¹ "Christianity in the Modern World," pp. 211-212.

to say that the Kingdom of God and the Church invisible are identical (if by the invisible Church we mean the number of those who will finally be saved), because this does not account for the *present* distinction between the Church and the Kingdom. With this let us cheerfully leave the realm of definition to those who more heartily enjoy its idiosyncrasies. Although there is this distinction between the two, it is far from my purpose to separate them ; indeed, the whole object of these chapters is to bring them together in the endeavour to cast the light of the Kingdom of God—the greatest conception that we can hold before our mind, especially when we have regard to its glorious extension beyond the confines of earth—upon the enterprise of the Christian Church in these auspicious days.

St. Paul's view of the Church as the body of Christ, filled with His life and controlled by His will, keeps the conceptions of the Church and the Kingdom as the reign of God closely united. But it is the tragedy of our Christian history that we have not kept together these two great New Testament

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conceptions, but have done the very thing against which the whole life of Jesus was a solemn warning; we have largely allowed the free spirit of the Christian religion to harden into a religious *institution*, and have been so intent upon the organization of the Church, as an end in itself, as to lose sight of that far greater end—the reign of God in all the earth.

Jesus truly founded the Church as a visible organized society, although Matthew alone reports him as using the word *ἐκκλησία* (Matt. xvi. 18; xviii. 17); the other two Synoptic writers strangely omitting it.¹

He must have thought at times of the “forms” in which His Church would later on express itself, but, apart from His solemn words at the institution of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, He said nothing about it. On the contrary, all through His life He manifested considerable impatience with the

¹ NOTE.—*ἐκκλησία* is used in the LXX to translate *קָהָל* congregation, and sometimes *הָעָם*, which, however, is generally translated by *συναγωγή*. It is used in Matt. xviii. 17, most probably in the sense of “congregation.”

spirit that trusts in religious *organization* as such. There are few things which more quickly move to impatience a great, free soul, who finds the essence of religion in love outpoured in service to God and man, than the exasperating habit of thinking that this essence of religion is in *acts* of worship, and conventional *forms* of service. This religion of laws and regulations surrounded Jesus, and to Him it seemed a travesty of that which was truly the sublimest thing on earth.

He established, then, a Church—a society closely knit together, and glowing with religious fervour and devotion—through which the reign of God might be more fully realized. If He ever thought that before the end of the next century this Church would have commenced to develop into a great, frowning ecclesiastical and political institution, more intent upon its forms of worship and its orthodoxy than upon its great spiritual task of bringing the souls of men beneath the splendour of the reign of God and the inspiration of eternal life, He must have trembled. This hardening of the Christian religion into

a rigid ecclesiastical system, however, is an unwelcome fact of history.

If we could take up the Synoptic Gospels for the first time, and should be asked to predict the kind of Church that would arise on the foundation of the life and teaching of Jesus therein recorded, we would never dream of predicting anything approaching the Holy Catholic Church of the third or fourth century; and it may be doubted whether we would ever dream of a great deal of our unbending ecclesiasticism to-day. Rauschenbusch, thinking of this hardening of Christianity in the matter of *doctrine*, says: "Imagine Jesus, with the dust of Galilee on His sandals, coming into the Church of St. Sophia, in Constantinople, in the fifth century, listening to dizzy doctrinal definitions about the relation of the human and divine in His nature."¹ There is, I know, a rejoinder that can be made to such a criticism; there is a case to be stated for the development of doctrine. Nevertheless, when we have said all in support of this development, the great change is there, in the

¹ "Christianity and the Social Crisis," p. 94.

history of the Church, and it is too wide a departure from original Christianity to be justified by all our argument.

The Christian Church, of course, was bound to develop into a definite organization with its own forms of worship. This is reasonable enough. But it was not bound to subordinate its faith to its forms; and it was not bound to lay such tremendous emphasis on the *external* features of a life that is essentially inward and spiritual. Many may say, in the language of a later time, "*Regnum Christi est externum*," but this does not alter the fact that we may lose the glory of the Kingdom of Christ in subservience to its *outward* features.

Harnack, who fully recognizes the large place the Church filled and the good work that it accomplished in the centuries during this "solidifying and codifying of its religion," gives three reasons for the change: (1) The general principle that "the religion of strong feeling and of the heart passes into the religion of custom, and therefore of form and of law"; (2) the influx of Hellenism, of the Greek spirit; and (3) the struggle with

Gnosticism.¹ All these reasons are surely very true; but the force of the first will be felt by all. It is quite necessary, without doubt, that a great spiritual movement which arises warmly and spontaneously amongst men in a time of deep feeling and intense thought should, if it is to continue, assume some visible form, for an institution will tend to preserve it. But it is the tragedy of nearly all our spiritual awakenings, that in time men lose their soul—that spark of the Divine which first kindled them—in their outward forms, and regard their “institutions” as their essence, and as ends in themselves.

So the Christian Church for centuries, by an undue emphasis on its *organization* and by conceiving its work chiefly as the support of that organization, lost the wider and more uplifting view of Christ—that the Church is organized simply as a means to a sublime end, namely, that of realizing upon earth the beauty and the power of the realm of God.

It is not the objective of this chapter to

¹ “What is Christianity?” p. 212.

endeavour to trace the various historical interpretations of the Kingdom of God with which a study of Church history so liberally furnishes us. The reader may be referred to a clear and concise section of Candlish's book on "The Kingdom of God" (Lecture V: "Attempts to realize the Kingdom in the Past"), in which many of these interpretations are set forth. Reference, however, may be made to three well-known historical views of the Kingdom,¹ which have continued down to our time and are still potent, the effect of which is to obscure both the true relationship of the Church to the Kingdom, and the breadth and sublimity of Christ's teaching on the reign of God. They may be stated thus:

1. The undue separation of Church and Kingdom in apocalyptic theories, such as Chiliasm.
2. The mistaken identification

¹ NOTE.—I am indebted here to Professor Adams Brown for this *grouping* of these theories. In the twelfth chapter of his "Christian Theology in Outline" he deals admirably with them under three headings: 1. Chiliastic; 2. Ecclesiastical; 3. Individualistic; but does not seek to show how they affect the relationship of the *Church* to the Kingdom.

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of the Kingdom and the Church as an hierarchical system by Augustine ; and the perpetuation of it in the Roman Catholic Church to-day. 3. The tendency of Protestantism, in its warm advocacy of redemption, too strictly to confine the Kingdom to the work of grace within the soul of man.

(1) It has been mentioned above that the view of the Kingdom taken by the earliest Church was largely apocalyptic. It is true that in real life it enjoyed the exhilaration of a present community of God, but *theologically* its tendency was to set the Kingdom in the future. The earliest Fathers generally regard the Kingdom as future, although they frequently speak of the Christian brotherhood as a *πολιτεία* established, of course, in this life. Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, Polycarp, Tertullian and others, are all inclined to the view of the Kingdom as future. This apocalyptic view was later on modified by the Alexandrian teachers, who more keenly appreciated the present reign of God, although Montanism, by its extreme Chiliastic views, tried, rather vainly, to fan the flame of the apocalyptic hope.

Now Chiliasm, in most of its forms, unduly separates Church and Kingdom. If the coming of the Kingdom is the miraculous intervention of God at the last—the sudden and glorious appearance of the reign of God at the consummation of the age—then it cannot be very vitally connected with a Church established on earth *now*, except, indeed, as its great hope and the triumphant completion of its life.

The Chiliast, indeed, may be most enthusiastic in his Church life in the belief that within the Church alone one can find the hope of the future Kingdom; but the point is this—he will not regard the supreme work of the Church as the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth; he will not think it the Church's duty in the name of Jesus Christ and the Most High God to lay the foundations of a new and better civilization *now* in the souls of men, which will issue in the Christianizing of human life in all its relationships; and he will not associate closely, even in thought, the moral and social progress of the race with the Church's work in the world. The Chiliast

will rather think that the task of the Church is to save as many souls as it can from the rack and ruin of the days, from the pernicious spell of the world, which is destined to go from bad to worse, until at last God appears, brings it all to an end, and saves from the general catastrophe the company of His saints. The Chiliastic spirit is still very strong in many quarters. The recent war, with its flood of sorrows and its dismaying calamities, has revived the interest of many in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and particularly in the Books of Daniel and Revelation, which cast a peculiar spell upon this type of mind ; and quite a host of people has arisen to cast the shadow (or the glory as the case may be) of the imminent end of the world upon our day and generation.

The Chiliast finds in the idea of the Millennium, which is rooted in Jewish sources, a fairer hope than that which shines in the promise of this world becoming the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ. There are, one would hasten to say, within this school of thought many who are deeply spiritual and have the greatest reverence for the Scriptures,

although they interpret them strictly in the letter. Their earnestness in Christian enterprise, as it presents itself to them, is very commendable ; but there is one point at which they do not share our Lord's outlook on life and His view of the Kingdom of God. They despair of the present world, whereas He did not. The modern eschatological school (which does not *itself* hold the Chiliastic view), one ventures to say, is seriously wrong in holding that Jesus despaired of His age. Passages like the " Little Apocalypse," in Mark xiii. (and parallels), may create this impression in the mind of one who does not make sufficient allowance for their Jewish element or for their highly symbolical character. But there are far larger sections of the teaching of Jesus, which create quite the opposite impression. He walked about the world as one who was completely at home in it ; He regarded it as God's world ; not a bird fell to the ground without the knowledge of God ; the lilies in the field and the corn on the hills shone with a divine meaning. St. Paul travelled through Asia Minor and glorious Greece and has left us scarcely a line

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to show his appreciation of nature ; but Jesus was a lover of the hills and the lake and the great arch of the sky. He was at home, whether in solitude beyond the Jordan, or in the eager crowds of Jerusalem. With regard to the world of men and women surrounding Him, He lived constantly among people who could scarcely appreciate any of His great ideas ; their stolidness must often have been exasperating to Him ; and yet He had such a fundamental belief in them and in their worth and possibilities as to give His life willingly for them ; and He had faith enough to believe that the kind of life that He Himself lived—the life that offers all on the altar of a real love of God and men—would so prevail as to become regnant among mankind. If He were lifted up, He would draw all men unto Himself.¹

Is this the demeanour of one who despaired of the world ? Is this the outlook of one who saw the whole world going to pieces and beheld no remedy for it, except the saving of a limited number, who might be preserved till the final crash came and a new æon might

¹ John xii. 32.

begin? No! St. John, with his great insight, presents to us a Christ conscious of an illimitable past and an eternal future, appearing for a little time in this world, to touch it with the saving influence of this wider cosmic life of God.

Our Lord was no cheerfully-deluded optimist, complacently refusing to see the sinister side of life, for no man spoke so solemnly and seriously of the awful menace of our sin; but He firmly believed in the redemption of mankind and the progress of the Kingdom of God, in spite of this menace. Schweitzer speaks of the "world-negating spirit of Jesus."¹ If this spirit abode in Him, it applied to the world only in so far as it came beneath the dominion of evil; there was also in Him a "world-affirming" spirit; He affirmed the world beneath the dominance of the reign of God; He looked out with hope upon a world of men and women, who would later on, in growing numbers, see life as He saw it.

But to return to the Chiliast. He, unfortunately, does not seem to have this great

¹ "The Quest of the Historical Jesus," p. 400.

hope for the world. He does not seem to believe in a potent Kingdom of God spreading here and now in the open fields of the world. He sees the world hastening to its doom ; and, whether he contemplates its calamities or its vaunted material progress, he sees in these things the fulfilment of the Scripture, which assures him of its approaching dissolution. Chiliasm, therefore, whether in its ancient or its modern form, separates too widely the Church and the Kingdom.

(2) If our conclusion be that Chiliasm separates the Church and the Kingdom, what are we to say of the great ecclesiastical theory, built upon the teaching of Augustine, that brings them so close together as to merge the Kingdom in the visible Church ? Here is no attempt to set the Kingdom in the distant future, but a most vigorous endeavour to bring it into the midst of the present life, and to body it forth in such conspicuous form, that all eyes can see it. The outcome of this endeavour, sustained so strongly through many centuries, is the doctrine that the visible organized Catholic Church itself is the

Kingdom of God, within which alone salvation is to be found.

But in this doctrine as it is presented to-day in the Roman Catholic Church, the great spiritual features of the Kingdom of God, as taught by Jesus, tend to disappear in a huge ecclesiastical system giving prominence to many of the very things against which the New Testament urgently and solemnly warns us.

The powerful influence of Augustine (354-430 A.D.) and of his notable treatise on "The City of God" has been so often traced and estimated in Church Histories and other works, that many words on this notable religious genius and famous ecclesiastic would be out of place here. Cyprian, although he conceived the Kingdom as future, and therefore did not identify it with the organized Church, nevertheless had helped to pave the way for Augustine's doctrine by getting the point conceded that the visible, outward Church was the body of Christ. Augustine was influenced by Cyprian, but advanced much further to the position that the visible Catholic Church itself was the Kingdom of

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God while the State was the Kingdom of the world. God reigned now in His Church with His saints in the midst of His enemies, but later He would reign with them in heaven. Augustine in his great controversy with the Donatists, the powerful and extreme non-conformist party in Northern Africa, strove to prove that before there can be true unity in the Church of God, there must be unity in visible organization, and to this outward organization he gave a lofty place. This organization, he believed, was to be found in the episcopal government of the Catholic Church, and to the rule of this hierarchy the State must submit. He believed that the Kingdom of God as it was represented in the Church would spread in the world, as in time the Church would dominate the State. "But Augustine," says Harnack, "gave a much stronger hold than his predecessors to the conception that the Church is the Kingdom of God, and by the manner in which, in his 'Divine Comedy,' the *De Civitate Dei*, he contrasted the Church with the State, far more than his own expressed view, he roused

the conviction that the empirical Catholic Church . . . was the Kingdom of God and the independent State that of the devil.”¹

It is not difficult to see how such a doctrine would tend to develop. Augustine himself, though he gave such prominence to ecclesiastical organization, did not subordinate the spiritual features of the City of God to its external form—his spiritual mind saved him from this; but, unfortunately, his doctrine was built up by his successors into a system in which externalism predominated. It is easy to understand how his language could be interpreted narrowly by those who did not share his vision. There is, for instance, a passage in the *De Civitate Dei* which reads as follows: “ ‘ And I saw thrones,’ says he, ‘ and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.’ This may not be understood of the last judgment: but by the thrones are meant the rulers’ places of the Church, and the persons themselves by whom it is governed; and for the judgment given them it cannot be better explained than in

¹ “ History of Dogma.” E.T., V. 151.

these words, ' whatsoever ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'"¹ This passage shows us how deeply Augustine believed in outward ecclesiastical organization, but it also clearly indicates how parts of his famous treatise could be used as a basis for the most unbending theory that the visible Catholic Church itself, in all its hierarchical externalism, is the Kingdom of God.

The issues of this kind of teaching are clear. If the Roman Church, as it stands organized to-day with its line of pontiffs, who claim to be the only true successors of the apostles, be in very truth the Kingdom of God, it must then be clothed with Divine *authority*, and to it all must submit. But can this claim be justified? Even if the Church making it were perfect, even if all its record were above suspicion, the claim that in its visible ecclesiasticism it is the Kingdom of God, could not be conceded; for, as we have endeavoured to urge above, the Kingdom in

¹ "The City of God," Book XX, chap. 9.

the mind of our Lord, by its very nature, is wider than any organized society; it is not that society itself, though it may be realized within it.

It seems generally to be thought that the strength of the Roman Catholic Church is in its complete and elaborate ecclesiastical organization; but, from the point of view of the New Testament, particularly of the teaching of Christ, this is not its strength; its strength is rather to be found in the spiritual purity of such of its members as are true to the light as they see it. Its ecclesiastical theory regarding the Papacy, Infallibility and Temporal Dominion, cannot find an adequate basis either in the spirit or in the teaching of Jesus Christ.

It is neither desirable nor possible to express the great spiritual reign of God, as taught by Jesus, in terms of an ecclesiastical organization, which seeks temporal power, and all too frequently subordinates the greater spiritual features of the Gospel to this coveted dominion. Any theory, then, be it Roman Catholic or not, that would identify the

realm of God with outward religious organization would obscure the sublime spiritual idea that is the glory of the teaching of Christ.

(3) The Protestant view of the Kingdom of God begins, of course, with a Reformation, but it does not end there, as it is at present undergoing considerable development. The emphasis of the Reformation, it need hardly be stated, was upon the relation of the *individual* to God ; the whole movement was a powerful reaction against the unlawful domination of the Church in the realm of individual responsibility and accountability to God. The Kingdom of God, therefore, by the Reformers' doctrine was removed from the fabric of the visible organization of the Catholic Church and set up in the soul of the believer. Luther emphasized faith and the Word of God, and by the latter he by no means meant the letter of Scripture, but, generally, its message of God's free grace to sinful men. He used the term " Kingdom of Christ," and by this he meant the spiritual reign of Christ in the believer's soul realized by faith and the Word of God. Ritschl,

referring to this Kingdom of Christ, says that by this Luther understood "the inward union between believers and their Mediator, which subsists exclusively through the Word of God and faith, and is bound by no law or legal government: *regnum Christi est spirituale.*"¹ But Ritschl goes beyond the mark when he says: "The Reformers wholly lose sight of the idea of the Kingdom of God, so far as its eschatological sense was not forced upon them by the New Testament. But, on the other hand, they construct an idea analogous to it under the title of the Kingdom of Christ."² It is true that in their conception of a reign of God within the soul of the individual we do not get the full wealth of the New Testament idea; but it was a tremendous gain to religion when the Kingdom of God was seen to have no true setting in the heavy structure of an ecclesiastical system and its frowning dominion, and transferred to the sensitive realm of the soul. The Reformers, then, cannot "wholly have lost sight" of this idea, even if they did

¹ "Justification and Reconciliation," p. 287.

² *Ibid.*, p. 286.

change its terminology. Further, it is not accurate to say that Protestant theology has given us an individualistic interpretation *only* of the Kingdom of God. Calvin, whose idea of the Kingdom was very much the same as Luther's, had definite ideas as to its wider realization in the State. He did not in any sense transfer the Church's function to the civil power, but he thought that both Church and State should work harmoniously together for the Kingdom of Christ. Later on, in Puritanism, notwithstanding its austere and forbidding demeanour, we find the luminous conception of the Kingdom of God as the "whole of the godly in the nation, however they might differ in doctrine and ecclesiastical views."¹

But Protestantism, especially in its earlier forms, *mainly* interpreted the Kingdom as the life of God within the believer's soul, and all along the course of its history this has been prominent in its theology, rather than the wider realization of it in human society. Both Calvinism and Arminianism found the crux of their theologies in the relation of

¹ *Vide* Candlish's "The Kingdom of God," p. 296.

God to the individual. We have previously seen that this idea truly lies at the heart of the New Testament conception of the Kingdom, which began in the soul of Jesus, in His thrilling consciousness of the life of God, and in His glad submission to that great sovereignty of the Eternal within Him. All this justifies the Protestant emphasis.

A little reflection, however, will convince us how an exaggerated emphasis of this idea will lead to its perversion, and to the marring of the beauty and winsomeness of the New Testament ideal. One has only to be completely absorbed in his own salvation to be anxious that all the streams of God should flow into his own soul, and the beauty of the Christian religion has already faded within him !

We realize this quite keenly in the matter of a man's personal life, but we have not realized it keenly enough *theologically*. Protestantism, in its anxiety to protect the religious rights of the individual, in its eagerness to protest against the unlawful sway of ecclesiastical authority, in its strong belief that God

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touches human life by making His presence felt within the spirit of a man, and by its consequent conclusion that the proper sphere of religion is the *soul*, has developed worthily this view of salvation. But it has too much neglected the counterpart of this—that this salvation is only fully realized in the life of the beloved community, that it is the Church's duty to realize that the Kingdom of God is in this fellowship, which must sow the seeds of its new and better way of life throughout human society.

We are realizing more and more to-day that the Christian salvation is not something that is poured into a man's soul, as wine into a flask ; it is not a gift of God that is ready-made ; it is the *birth of a new spirit* within him—a spirit that will immediately reach out to a larger life in its fellowship with other souls.

Salvation is, in a word, the discovery and possession of the life of God, whose Being goes forth continually in a ministry to the whole of His creation ; Who lives not in loneliness, but in all this outgoing of His love. The greatest thing in the Kingdom of God,

then, is this eternal fellowship of love, of God with men, and of men with one another.

We ought, therefore, to welcome within Protestantism the coming of a new spirit into our theology, which is anxious to interpret more fully our Lord's central doctrine of the Kingdom.

CHAPTER VI

THE CALL OF THE PRESENT SITUATION

WE approach now the crucial point of our inquiry. We have endeavoured to see what the Kingdom of God is in the mind of Jesus and in the rest of the New Testament, and we have noticed some of the historical interpretations which have not done justice to its breadth and fullness. Now the urgent question remains—"How is this Kingdom to be realized on earth by the Church?" To this difficult and yet supremely important problem we shall shortly come; but let us first strive to understand why, at the present juncture in the world's history, the Church has a reasonable hope of realizing the realm of God amongst men. Three factors may be set forth, which favour strongly the establishment of a world-wide dominion of God just now.

(1) *The challenge of the present historical situation.*—Religion, of course, ought not to wait for the call of historical events. It is with us to touch life with solemnity and beauty at all times. It is able to flash its vision splendid upon us either in the flat, dreary waste of years, when nothing stirs the pulses of the world, or in the swift march of great and terrible events. Religion ought not to wait for the world's bidding ; its office is to lead the world. But, as a matter of fact, it has generally come to its own under the loud call of a great and perilous world situation. It is when men in days of extremity come face to face with the naked and fearful realities of life, when their souls are hot within them, when life clashing upon them strikes fire into their thinking, that religion is apt to leap ahead in the van of progress. We commonly say that man's extremity is God's opportunity ; this does not mean that the Almighty ironically waits till the situation is lost before He saves it ; it means, rather, that the days of extremity set free a whole world of emotion and desire within men, making them responsive to the great call of religion.

Such days of tragedy, of wonder and of fear, of surging emotion and trembling hope we have recently passed through, and, indeed, are passing through now ; and if we have not quivered with their meaning, our souls must be almost dead within us.

This is not a time to write of the recent war. It is there in the past, with all its abounding horrors, its inhuman cruelties, and its perfectly wonderful offering of sacrifice which has broken up the fountain of the great deep within us. It is all there in the past. " Well, then," say some, " in the past let it remain ! " But this we cannot do. We cannot forget that blot upon our civilization ; we cannot fare forth into the hopeful future as if this great tragedy had not been, for it casts its shadow ominously upon the coming days, unless we can find some way of smiting the fell spirit of it to earth.

As the past war was the outcome—the inevitable outcome—of the world's manner of life for centuries, so it is with that manner of life that we have to reckon. Two years before the war Canon Temple (now Bishop Temple) wrote these words : " If you take

some millions of people just like ourselves, generous up to a point but still predominantly selfish, with varying abilities, and leave them to live together for several generations, the result would be something like the horror of our present European civilization. The sin that has made it is just our sin. That is what our sort of character works out at if you leave it alone.”¹ Similarly the recent fearful debacle in Europe is the kind of thing that the life of the world, as we have it before us in the history of the last three or four generations, issues in, if it be not controlled by something higher.

What, then, is the spectacle which the world presents to us to-day? It is a spectacle begetting in us at one stroke, grave anxiety and radiant hope. The most optimistic of us, who tenaciously holds that God brings good even out of evil, who is prone to see in the re-establishment of our institutions, in the new rising tides of commerce, in the widespread and passionate longing for universal peace, and in the wistful turning to religious ideals on the part of many of our leaders of

¹ “The Kingdom of God,” p. 75.

thought—so many heralds of a new and better day—cannot surely fail to see the moral peril lurking at the door of our civilization, nor can he look without a rending of his heart upon the open sorrows of Europe to-day.

Here and there we have rebuilt the world, and expeditiously removed the gaping ruins of the past conflict ; nature has covered with her mantle of living green—her wonderful symbol of healing—the marks of the fearful devastation of it all ; and our civilization now sets forward anew in its course, as if it has survived the shock which made it totter for a time on its foundations. But in vain we remove the ruins of conflict, and in vain we build again our shattered cities, if we do not attempt to lay low in the soul of the race the spirit that brought all this havoc upon us. The world's recuperative powers are truly wonderful ; our modern civilization is a hardy plant that seems able to survive the hot blast of the inferno of conflict ; but there is one thing that it cannot ultimately survive, and that is the persistence in its inmost life of the will to war.

The immediate ruinous legacies of conflict

pass in the course of time ; famine and the devastation of it passes ; red revolution has its frightful day and ceases to be ; the impoverished manhood of the peoples recovers at length its virility. But what of all this emergence out of the days of travail, if we have not purified the springs of life and set the will of man towards a better way of living and a fairer day ? Surely no day never called more loudly to the spirit of man to awake and begin anew ; and surely never was the need of a new world ideal written so plainly by the finger of God upon the face of the whole earth. This is pre-eminently a moment when the ideal of the City of God on earth should kindle the imagination and set free the energies of men of good will everywhere.

Side by side with war and its fell issues there is another conflict, the reverberations of which are heard all round the world just now, and the cause of which is the same as that just mentioned—I mean the social conflict. It has been, as every one knows, a long and bitter struggle, and unless religion introduces some new and redeeming factor, it will long

continue. Its roots are in the same soil that produces wars, hatreds and antagonisms of all kinds.

It is our way of life, with its greed, its lust of power, its worship of the things that are far beneath the homage of our souls, its lamentable failure to appreciate the value of human life in unfavourable surroundings. It is our way of life, with its eyes holden from the great things of God—alone the highest good of any people—that is the deepest factor in the cause of all this social strife.

But some will find a place for all this strife, whether military or social, in their philosophy. The world is built up, they will say, by strife, by the rising and falling of civilizations, by the antagonisms of men, and by all the bludgeoning of experience. Therefore there will always be wars and factions of some kind.

This kind of talk, in the presence of manifest ills that need not have happened, is little better than nonsense. It confuses the strife which arises from the struggle of the race against an environment, for which it is not responsible, with the wars of bitterness and

appalling suffering, for which its moral lapses are responsible. The one arises from our place in creation, which we cannot help ; the other from a way of life amongst us, which we are bound to remedy. It ought to be evident enough that we shall never eliminate strife *per se*, as one of life's essential elements ; that if we abolish war and solve the problem of social and industrial antagonism, there will be quite enough of " the rigour of the game " left in life to satisfy the most doughty and adventurous.

If, then, the world by its open need has ever called for a renewal of its spirit, it is calling now loudly and insistently. It could be shown that our day of grace is auspicious because it is the meeting-place of the waters of several of the great streams of history. The stream that has recently ended in the cataract of war meets with the stream of religious thought issuing, as we noticed in the first chapter, in the rediscovery of the Kingdom of God. These turbulent waters meet in our time the shining river of a new religious hope, in the depth and in the smooth onward sweep of which they may be merged,

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as they are carried forward to the City of God.

Surely this is a supreme moment for the Church. Rarely has the world been so plastic to any hand that is strong enough to mould it. Men generally are trusting in nothing particularly; their faith in many human institutions has been badly shaken; and there is no great spiritual world-ideal that would now compete successfully with that of the Christian religion. Therefore is the moment favourable for the fuller realization of the Kingdom of God.

We have stood in our time in the midst of the rising and falling of the nations, when the kingdoms have been moved and the earth melted. Is it, then, to be wondered at that the conception of the Kingdom of God, wider than all the nations and more steadfast, should be forming in our soul? A little while ago the German padre, who attended Edith Cavell at her death, writing to a friend of his—a French pastor in Switzerland—spoke of the emotion that filled his soul in the last few pathetic and terrible moments in the life of the martyr nurse.

When the Germans, without mercy, had done their worst, two feelings possessed his soul. "I felt," he said, "the utter cruelty of war, and the glory of that Kingdom of God lifted high over all the nations." Who of us has not many times, in the passing of these recent years, shared the good padre's vision?

(2) If the challenge we have just noticed is a call from without, there is just as urgent a call from *within* the Church. One cannot read present Christian literature without realizing how very strong and widely spread is the desire for a simpler Christianity. This remark, perhaps, may be misunderstood. There are those who are enamoured of simplicity for certain obvious reasons not greatly to their credit. I do not, then, refer to the worthy individual who is so enamoured of the "simple Gospel" that he challenges every new idea as he would a spy, and is the sworn enemy of philosophers, but to those who are feeling more and more keenly that we have obscured the clear and beautiful spirit of Christianity by our elaborate historical interpretation of it.

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As historical research has thrown fuller and yet fuller light upon the Synoptic Gospels, we have come to realize that religion to Jesus Christ was a singularly clear and definite experience of God and the reign of God amongst men, which can be stated simply in a few pregnant words, and which, moreover, can not only be stated but enjoyed by us deeply in our souls. This faith, however, has been so overlaid with a mass of metaphysical, theological and ecclesiastical interpretation that its outlines are no longer clear to the average man. Any discerning Church historian, doubtless, could give quite a good reason for most of this interpretation. Harnack, for instance, while fully conscious of the simple essence of Christianity, sets forth some of the gains that accrued to it through its association with Hellenistic philosophy, and its development into Catholicism, though he is by no means insensible to the losses it sustained.¹

Almost everywhere in the Christian world to-day there is a desire to deliver the Christian religion from the theories that have clung

¹ "What is Christianity?" pp. 197-210.

about it in history, and to bring it back into the realm of *life*, where it first appeared and flourished ; for the revelation of Jesus, as Dr. Newton Clarke so well reminds us,¹ was pre-eminently made in life and action. The conviction, then, grows that if we could recover the view-point of Jesus, and could feel as He did about God and man, with but a fraction of His intensity, we should have discovered the religion for which our day and generation wait. The other day in India, an educated Hindu inquirer, who had been reading the New Testament eagerly, asked a friend of the writer—an engineer in the Civil Service—to recommend him a simpler book, which would state in a few clear words what the Christian faith was. Have we not here reflected, in this Oriental's desire to discover the *essence* of Christianity, a quest that is ours to-day ? The average man, who has not much interior knowledge of Christianity but views its ecclesiastical organization chiefly from the outside, because of the many Churches, the various forms of worship and the rival theologies, is at a loss

¹ " Outline of Christian Theology," p. 13.

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to know what Christianity really is. If he thinks about it at all, he probably has a vague notion that it is something much more attractive and more human in its sympathies than all this heavy elaboration of it ; but, beyond connecting it with the alluring figure of Jesus Christ, he does not attempt to define it. Yet both the man in the street, who makes no pretence to understand religion, and the Christian philosopher, who is consumed with a desire to be able to set it forth simply and directly, probably agree in believing that the faith, love and warm human interest of Jesus, and salvation as He conceived it, are what our disordered world needs.

This call from within the Church to interpret Christianity more simply, and to bring it to bear more powerfully upon the whole domain of human life, finds its answer in the Kingdom of God, as a reign of God to be realized throughout human society. Here we have a conception happily free from most of the foreign growths that have attached themselves to the Christian religion throughout the centuries, spiritual enough to satisfy the

most intuitive of the mystics, evangelical enough as the reign of God within the heart of man to satisfy the most ardent evangelist, and wide enough in the great reach of its enterprise to arouse all the energies and devotion of the social reformer.

Let this great Christian conception only be interpreted spiritually enough, in the light of our Lord's Divinity and saving power, in the light of His immeasurable human sympathy, and in the light of a reign of God reaching through the cosmos far beyond the confines of earth and the episode of death, and we have a view of Christian enterprise that is able to touch the whole horizon of our time with the dawn of a better day.

(3) The third reason why the hour is now striking for the realization of the Kingdom is to be found in the great *response* that would doubtless be made to this ideal at the present time.

It is very easy to under-estimate the spiritual response of any age. The discouraging features of life have a habit of lying about on its surface, and of attracting the attention even of the unobservant. Anybody who has

two eyes in his head can see that we to-day are easily fascinated by pleasure, by wealth, and generally by the Mammon of this modern time. Consequently we frequently hear that we live in a materialistic, " thing-dominated " age, which is more prone to worship at the shrine of Luxury than at the throne of God.

One would not for a moment belittle this prevailing sin of ours—God knows it is serious enough ; but let it be said that our eyes must be half closed if we do not see on every hand numbers of men and women of good will, whose wistful souls might easily be swept by the breath of the Spirit of God, and who would heartily respond to a great spiritual adventure. There are many, truly, who, like the notorious individual in the parable, sit down in contentment when their barns are full ; but there are not a few who, though they have laboured to fill their store-houses, would snap their fingers at all their accumulated harvest if they were brought beneath the light of some great spiritual enterprise that appealed to their imagination as a true cause of God, and to their

intellect as one that might reasonably be advocated amongst men. Most men and women of the worthier type seem somehow to know in their deepest soul that life is not a matter of accumulating *things*. They feel that we most truly live when all our being goes out in some rich offering, or when our soul is consumed in the flame of some mighty enthusiasm. These are the unforgettable moments of our life; and the people who experience them are not a scattered few, whom it would take a miracle to find and marshal, but a goodly company in all the earth.

It is very easy, in these days of aloofness and indifference, to under-estimate the response which the Christian Church would make to a clear spiritual call. In contemplating any large spiritual adventure, we ought to call to mind the Church's noblest days, when its fellowship was rich in those who lived and died for interests which they deemed to be greater than life itself, and we ought to believe that our own day will not be found barren of this same good spirit of sacrifice and endeavour. If men in our time

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have not given themselves or their substance willingly in the cause of religion, it is partly because we have not set the Christian enterprise *concretely* enough before them ; we have not had definite ideas enough upon its application to the various spheres of life ; we have spoken of sacrifice in general terms, but we have not indicated clearly what must be sacrificed and to what reasonable end. Sacrifice for its own sake, and to no definite end, will appeal chiefly to the morbid ; but in the light of a shining objective, which can never be reached without it, it will appeal at once to the generous-hearted.

Now in the Kingdom of God, as we shall see later on, we have a great religious ideal which all can appreciate—an enterprise concrete enough to assume a very definite form in any Church, and one directed to an objective towards which hosts of men and women, religious and otherwise, are already stretching out their hands.

But have we any convincing evidence that this response to the Kingdom could be forthcoming? Surely, we have. A Conference held a little time ago at Glasgow, numbering

two thousand delegates representing thirty-six different nations, may be taken as a sign of the times. The general subject was, "Is it possible to have a better world?" The notable feature of the Conference was the intense, passionate, challenging belief of several of the speakers in the power of Christianity to renew the face of the earth. It was not simply a cheerful hope in their mind, but a conviction that seemed to clothe them with a bristling armour. Accordingly, they flung down their challenge to their contemporaries with a right good will. Now these people, who declared their faith in a realm of God on earth with such decision, undoubtedly represent large numbers of others all through the Christian world.

It is being realized by a growing number that our Christian responsibility to the age is a heavy one, largely because our failure in the past to bring life *as a whole* beneath the dominion of the Christian religion is a factor in the cause of the present distress. We have seen clearly enough that the Christian ideal must control the life of the individual; but we have not recognized with such clearness

its demands upon society, and we have not sought with any real persistence to cast the spell of its high ethics upon those who sit in the seats of the mighty. To correct this failure and, by the help of God to establish the City of God, in our time, is our high privilege and pressing duty.

Clear evidence that the call of the Kingdom of God would meet with a fervent response to-day is the notable prominence that it occupies in Foreign Mission enterprise. It is the strong emergence of the idea of the Kingdom in modern Christian thought that has rehabilitated Christian Missions, and breathed into them the large tolerance, warm humanitarianism and catholic spirit, which are commending them to-day to so many of wide vision and conquering mind.

No one could justly say that Christian missionaries in our time are more devoted, more heroic or self-sacrificing than those of an earlier day, but it is undeniable that a broader spirit and a wider vision characterize present missionary work. This spirit is admirably reflected in recent missionary

advocacy. There is nothing of the flat dogmatism that sweeps the ancestral religions of these peoples aside, as if there were no light and truth in them ; there is not even a hint of the intolerance that is impatient of the point of view and of the long history of these ancient peoples ; and, although the task set forth is so vast as to be overwhelming, there is in the presence of it an undaunted hope.

There is India, for example, an assemblage of peoples bewildering in its complexity, formless, grey with the life and habits of the centuries, bound hand and foot by caste, yet seething with its present discontent, half conscious only of its rising power, full of its changeless pessimism and full of its sorrow and its pride. Yet the missionary feels the greatness of it all, takes up the cudgels for it against the materialism of the West, does not believe in instructing it overmuch in Christian dogma, but believes that our religion more as a Divine friendship than a dogma, will capture the heart and win the spiritual mind of this great land. His vision, although he may not so express it, is that of the

Kingdom of God seen through the wondering eyes and felt in the awakened soul of India.

Something like this is the attitude of the enlightened missionary to-day. China may be full of oddities, of customs old as its Great Wall, of superstition, suffering, and idolatry, but these are not the features that impress the emissaries of the Christian Church to-day. They are rather those virile and ethical qualities of its deeper soul—that stability and general worth of its character, without which no people could have endured for more than three thousand years. It is this *soul* of China and the contribution that it will one day make to the Kingdom of God on earth, that modern missionary enterprise is quick to see. It is not unaware of all that stands in dark and fearful contrast to the Christian religion in these lands, but at the same time it is spurred on, not chiefly by this contrast, but by the rich treasure that these peoples will pour at the feet of Christ, when His faith is born within their soul—by all, for instance, that the mystic soul of India, with its great emphasis on

the spiritual, may bring to the Christian faith.

There is no finer manifestation of the spirit and the outlook of Christ than is exhibited in men of this type, who have not only a clear vision of the Kingdom of God in all the nations, and are in possession of the spirit that will establish it successfully, but who have given their life to realize it.

The spirit in our missionaries of largest mould, leading them not to endeavour to impose another religion on these peoples in the way of conquest, not dogmatically and aggressively to set one religion in competition with another, but to enter into their inner life to help them to discover an approach to Christianity from *within*, and enabling them to see that in Christ and the Kingdom of God they have all and more than that which they have been seeking in their deepest souls, is most commendable. The faith that leads them to realize that all light and truth is of God, and that all these spiritual realms in other nations, deep though they be in the shadow of many nameless practices, and overlaid with the revolting habits of the

centuries, may find in Christ the interpretation of their highest and holiest, is full of hope for the Kingdom of God to-day.

The day is past when your traveller of leisure, touching the fringe of many countries on his pleasant voyages, can afford to refer with a smile to the missionary and his fond and cheerful hope. The progress of the world must reckon with him now. The Christian religion is beginning to take a strong hand in world affairs. It is coming to be recognized in our time that the problem of internationalism is much more than a political question ; it is a great human problem that can never be solved by statecraft, but by that which enters far more deeply into the inward spiritual life of the nations. It is not merely a question of government and defence, of territorial boundaries and political integrity ; it is also a question of ideals, the history of which goes back far into the centuries. It is a question with which those, into whose hearts the Kingdom of God has flung its fire, are tremendously concerned.

The last few years of the nineteenth century, and the first two decades of the

twentieth, have witnessed the rise and progress of a movement in Christendom to bring all the peoples of the earth into one great realm of God. This is finding in many ways clear and forcible expression, and not least in the Christian Student Movement of the Universities and higher colleges of the world. This movement, with its other aims, stands firmly for the definite application of Christianity to international affairs, the ideal of which is the realization of the Kingdom of God all through the earth. This is the background against which the business of nearly all its conferences is transacted.

Mr. H. G. Wells in a recent book, "The Salvaging of Civilization," makes the interesting and impracticable proposal that we should establish a world State. But how are we to establish a world State, until we first of all establish the better way of living that he so finely writes about in the same volume; and how are we to create that better way of life except through the great appeal and the moving power of religion? There is not one of us who can afford to speak lightly of negotiation, but its power is really in

the moral and religious sanctions that are behind it.

The recent Washington Conference on the world's Peace was an outstanding example of that which may be accomplished by negotiation, but the Christian ideal, which has been struggling for expression for centuries, was behind it ; and it is evident that some of the reverses that arrested its progress were due to a failure to appreciate and respond to that ideal.

This growing desire, then, to seek the Kingdom of God in other lands is an assurance that there would be a fervent response to the clear call of the Kingdom in the Church to-day.

CHAPTER VII

THE REALIZATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH

IF the view set forth in the preceding pages be correct—that the Kingdom of God is already established upon earth—then our chief duty is to strive to bring the whole of human life beneath its dominion. This realization of the City of God upon earth is the sublimest adventure of the human spirit and, if undertaken heartily and intelligently by the Church, would lift Christian enterprise to the high level on which it was originally set. A more fascinating and compelling religious ideal can hardly be conceived.

What, then, is this realization of the Kingdom of God among men? We have seen that the central feature of the Kingdom was the life that Jesus lived—a life that was the outcome of His all-absorbing consciousness of God and of the reign of God within Him, and one

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that issued in the awakened and wondering society grouped about His person. The Kingdom in men, accordingly, is this same reign of God begetting in them the same life eternal, and consolidating it in the beloved community.

The character of this life of Jesus is well known. We may fail in all attempts to describe it, but we know its spirit. Instinctively we recognize it in Him and acknowledge it in others. We may sometimes be in doubt as to the meaning of His teaching ; we may not always understand His references to Himself ; we may often be at a loss in interpreting His actions ; but the one thing that we *do* understand is the life of abundant mercy and wondrous good-will that He lived. The spirit of this is so clear and definite that it can be recognized in every page of the New Testament record. Religion to Him was not the observance of ceremonies, it was the free life of a man's spirit : it was simply to love God utterly, not as a duty but as a passion ; and it manifested itself inevitably in warm-hearted, spontaneous, generous, gallant service to one's fellows. Religion to

Him was a life borne on irresistibly by the stream of Divine goodness and mercy whithersoever it pleased to carry one. The greatest thing a man could do was to commit himself to this full, moving tide of God. Jesus Himself put out upon these waters; and when at length, as they mingled with the swirling river of the world's evil, He was carried down to the gulfs of darkness for the eternal good of men, He did not complain. His pure faith in God and His amazing interest in men for their own sakes can hardly be described. Any words that one might write would read poorly, and seem to be quite inadequate. Let it be sufficient to say that in that supreme, unconquerable life, Christianity was born, and that this same life, begotten by His power in the earliest Christian community, brought into being a completely new order in the earth.

If, then, the members of the beloved community to-day can give free course to this life in themselves, so that it may spread in the wider world about them, they will be realizing the reign of God here and now.

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There are first of all two objections, at least, that ought to be noticed.

(1) It is held by some that this life of the Kingdom outlined in the Gospels is beyond the realm of practicability in these modern days, because the teaching of Jesus, on which it is founded, did not contemplate modern conditions of life at all. The Sermon on the Mount, it is held, may be an alluring ideal to luminous souls, but it is an ideal that is simply not realizable in life as it presses in upon us to-day, with all the speeding-up of competition, and all the jostling of a very imperfect and impatient world. Possibly it was suited to the quieter conditions of Oriental life in Palestine in the lifetime of Jesus—especially if it be granted that the thought of men was then dominated by the idea of the approaching end of the age. He could, therefore, say quite appropriately to them, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," or "Be not anxious for the morrow"; but this teaching is not suited to the twentieth century. Further, it is held that the ethics of Jesus which enjoin indiscriminate charity to anyone who seeks

our help, generosity to those who injure us, etc., could hardly be applied to the life of a *society* destined to spread at all widely in the world—even as an ideal for individuals they are Utopian enough—but as a system of teaching regulating the social and other relationships of a spreading society in the modern world, they are out of the question. These ethics of Jesus, then, are like the teaching of many another great religious genius, whose mind is more cognizant of the awful things of Eternity than of the things that stare average people in the face day by day. This objection has been stated at some length because it still arises in many forms. Many hold these views definitely ; and many others, while not deliberately holding them, are afraid that they are possibly true.

First of all, in reply to the contention that this life of the Kingdom is beyond us, it may be said that it was once lived heartily and not unsuccessfully by a number of people, who felt very keenly indeed the pressure of a huge and complex civilization and the hostility of an unfriendly world. The earliest Christians, who made a very gallant

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attempt to exhibit the life of the beloved community, doubtless felt that theirs was a very "modern" world ; but they lived this life because they realized that all about them there was a Presence which could maintain this spirit in them in unfavourable surroundings. In St. Paul, for instance, we see the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount in action—and in action of the most decisive and challenging kind. It seems generally to be thought that the key to St. Paul is a theological one ; but the Apostle had a far greater passion than that of doctrine. He discloses his secret to us much more in his pæan to love in First Corinthians than in all the argument of Romans. Beneath all his epistles there is the surge of a spiritual life which is precisely that which is set forth in the Sermon on the Mount.

Further, this view that the ethics of Jesus are impracticable is based on an unimaginative view of the Sermon on the Mount ; it rests largely upon a literal interpretation of this notable discourse. Obviously it was not intended to be understood strictly in the letter as a series of *absolute commands*, for at

least this reason : that Christ Himself did not so interpret it. He did not literally turn the other cheek to the smiter ; when struck rudely in the presence of the High Priest He quietly remonstrated with the aggressor, and thus resisted in surely an unforgettable way the sudden evil done to Him.

How is it that so many will persist in binding Jesus, of all men, down to the letter of His teaching ? He did not state truth abstractly in propositions, but threw it into glowing pictures ; He loved symbols, and when deeply moved used the boldest and most challenging figures of speech. Satan as lightning falling from heaven ; the mountain cast into the sea by the power of faith ; the beam in the eye of a censorious man—these and many other sayings warn us against the peril of a literal interpretation of His teaching. We should, at least, in our interpretation of that vivid teaching, pay some tribute to His own glorious imagination.

The spirit of the memorable section in the Sermon on the Mount on the non-resistance of evil, the love of enemies, etc., is so clear that it is surprising that we stumble in the

interpretation of it. He is here setting before us the contrast between two ways of life, and, as His custom was, He sharpens the contrast in true Oriental fashion. He throws the higher view of life into prominence against the background of the lower. Over against the calculating, vindictive spirit bent on retaliation and determined to exact the full penalty of the law—"an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"—He places the fine spirit of generosity and chivalrous charity that hastens to meet injury with forbearance, and coldness with warm-heartedness. If we are really the children of our Father who is in heaven, we must put away from ourselves this exacting, unmerciful legalism, and must let our good-will flow in a full stream unhindered to all men—even to our enemies. If injured, better to suffer it than to fly to retaliation. If asked to convey a man's goods a mile, why stop at the conventional mile? Why regard it as an onerous *duty*? Why not cheerfully go the second for the pleasure of the thing? Why be no better than the publicans and sinners who are generous enough to their friends? Something

like this is surely the meaning of these ethics. Christ is here setting forth suggestively and picturesquely the kind of service that one, who knows the love of God deeply, would instinctively wish to render to others. He is here appealing to the admirations of the soul. Who does not recognize a subtle humour and an irony devoid of bitterness all through the section? To wonder whether the saying, "Give to everyone that asketh of thee," can be applied absolutely to modern commerce is to be almost without imagination. The *spirit* of it, as we shall see later, should certainly find a place in commerce, if the Kingdom of God is to touch the whole domain of human life.

Undoubtedly there are many who would find these ethics quite impracticable, but a beginning would not be made with them. There are many who really regard this teaching as the fond dreaming of a visionary. There is a type of man so niggardly that he would catch his breath at the saying, "Let him have thy cloak also"; there is another so essentially combative that he would regard the passage, "Turn to him the other

(cheek) also " as the product of a simple mind.

But in any effort to realize the Kingdom of God a commencement would not be made with those who curl their lip at the venture. A beginning would be made within the Christian Church, amongst those whose presence therein means that they have some belief in this way of life. It cannot, surely, be urged that the Christian ideal of life, in which Christ and the realm of God and not self are the centre of interest, is beyond hope of realization *in the Church*; for the Church is the historical outcome of that kind of life which was in Christ, and afterwards was begotten in the apostles, and many others. Those who have not felt the power of Christianity *from within* may call this ideal Utopian, but the Church manifestly should not do so. The particular message of these pages is that the Church should put its house in order first.

One thing more remains to be said in reply to this view of the impracticability of Christ's ethics: it is that the New Testament consistently regards this way of life, which

we are now considering, as begotten in our souls and maintained there by the *power of God*. It is not set forth as a life that a man may commence to live in any cool moment when the idea of it happens to enter his head. It is the potent entrance of God into the very heart of his being, and it rests upon the truth that, while he is in this fellowship, that same Power will sustain him, strengthening and clarifying his witness to the truth in Christ. Against the background of this creative energy of God the whole of the New Testament stands written.

If this life of overflowing love be in God, as Christ declared it to be, if there be something cosmic in it—that is, if this spirit of the compassion and fellowship of Jesus be something which is really at the heart of the universe—then it is reasonable to believe that the power of God will make it quite possible to live it out in the midst of the world as we find it.

The New Testament represents Jesus as coming into the world from without—or, as we would interpret it in modern terms, from the larger spaces of the universe, and from

the greater life of the Eternal—bringing to our race a new gift, a new message from the heart of God, a new life which we call salvation. To fill the world with this life is the far-reaching aim of our religion; and it is our confidence that in this supreme matter we are co-workers with God.

(2) The second objection which must be noticed is urged by a greater number, as it is put forward by many within the Church, as well as by others.

It may fairly be stated as follows: It is not the business of the Church to give explicit directions as to how the Kingdom can be realized in the several departments of human life. Its duty is not to *apply* the life of the Kingdom to these different spheres; its chief duty is rather to preach the Kingdom of God, to hold it up as an ideal before men, and to allow them to make the application of it as they deem best. If the Church attempts to *organize* the life of the Kingdom, and goes out of its way to show its incidence upon the various callings of men, it will meddle with commerce, politics, international affairs, and what not, to its own

disadvantage, and it will fail to maintain its lofty position as the spiritual guide of men; and, further, it will depart widely from the example of Jesus, who did not attempt to apply His teaching to the social and economic life of Palestine.

With this objection, in so far as it seeks to preserve the spiritual function of the Church and to keep it free from all that would secularize it, one has much sympathy. One freely grants that we cannot entertain too high a conception of the Church's duty to hold a lofty spiritual ideal before men, whether they come up to its high standard or not. One also realizes the peril of interpreting the Kingdom of God narrowly as social amelioration, and thus of losing sight of its essentially spiritual character. Yet one cannot help feeling that our failure to *apply* the Christian ideal with decision to the several callings of men, and our disposition to think that our duty ends with the declaration of that ideal in our preaching, have been a prominent factor in the cause of the present disquieting and perilous condition of the world. The gravity of this failure is most

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clearly seen when we realize that we have not even applied the Christian ideal in any thorough-going way to the callings of the members of the community within the Church itself. Consequently it is not by any means an unheard-of thing to come across a merchant, for example, whose commercial life gives no indication of the higher ethics which he is in the habit of hearing in Church.

If such a case occurred only here or there it would not call for comment, as there are always many who enjoy high teaching as a theory, without entertaining the smallest idea of translating it into practice.

But, unfortunately, these cases are so numerous that we cannot escape the conclusion that the whole of the blame does not lie at the door of those who neglect to apply the Christian ideal to their life, but that a very definite share of it rests heavily upon us, who have not clearly indicated *how* it may be applied, or urged strenuously enough that, unless it be so applied, one's right to fellowship in the community of Christ is seriously imperilled.

Truly the business of the Church is to

preach the ideal of the Kingdom ; but that preaching is not simply the public proclamation of it. It is also the manifestation of it in the *life* of its members, who are to exhibit in their several vocations the blessedness of the fellowship and the exhilaration of the life which they enjoy in the community of Christ.

Moreover, it is not a reasonable deduction that, because our Lord did not apply His teaching to the social and economic problems of His time, we are, therefore, under no obligation to indicate the Christian solution of those of our day. The parallel does not hold. Jesus, of course, laid down universal principles that lie at the heart of true reform in all ages ; but He definitely established a Church which, as an organized body, would exist throughout the ages, and the members of which He hoped would bring the Christian ideal *potently* to bear upon the problems of life, as they met them in their particular age. Further, Christ by no means contented Himself with the *proclamation* of the Kingdom ; He preached it by His whole life and, without doubt, indicated by His example the

true impact of the Christian way of life upon the world.

It appears to the writer that in this great adventure a new beginning will have to be made *within* the Christian Church, and within what might be called the inner circle of it. A beginning must be made with those who clearly understand the fellowship of the Kingdom, who value it supremely, and who feel humanity's need of it so deeply that they are prepared, out of pure love of it, to cast their all into the golden scales. These discerning and intense souls must, by the help of God, bring to its birth again in their midst the spirit of the beloved community, and must be prepared to introduce its leaven, as far as it can reasonably be done in a very imperfect world, into the *whole domain* of life. This is the promising beginning that could be made in every church ; but to this we shall return later.

Therefore spiritual organization of this inner circle is an urgent matter. Strangely the Church to-day is seriously wanting in this inner organization of its fellowship. Ecclesiastically it is most highly organized ; this

is true not only of the episcopally-governed Churches, but of almost all the others. Synods, Councils and Assemblies bear witness to an organization so carefully and elaborately planned, that little is left to be desired. This organization, however, contemplates chiefly the support of the Church as a visible institution, and this involves, of course, the preaching of the Gospel and the maintenance of worship, etc. It ought also to involve the spreading of the Christian leaven in society generally, but this is the very part of the Church's work that we do not organize. We allow it to go on sporadically; hardly ever does the idea occur to us to attempt to marshal the whole spiritual strength of our membership definitely in this fascinating spiritual adventure. An illustration may clarify the idea that is here advanced. A thriving church, with a large membership in the heart of a city, may be highly and successfully organized, but its organization is designed chiefly to uphold its own worship, to support its ministry and to develop its institutions. These are often regarded as ends in themselves. It is, in fact,

the conventional opinion that if these flourish, if the congregation be large, the preaching eloquent and the institutions popular and vigorous, the church is notably successful. This, from a high point of view, may be quite an erroneous conclusion. The congregation may be merely an audience ; its members may be only feebly conscious of the bonds that would bind them into a beloved community in Christ ; they may have few ideas concerning the spreading Kingdom which the Church exists to develop ; and scarcely any attempt may be made to marshal their united spiritual strength in a sustained endeavour to make Christ's way of life regnant throughout the city. Such a church, with all its ecclesiastical fabric, would lack spiritual organization.

This view does not for a moment depreciate the value of worship. The souls of men are silently built up in the still moments of worship, when one speaks to them solemnly on the great matters of religion. But what is worship ? Certainly not an end in itself. It is a means to an end, and that end is *the strengthening of an eternal fellowship*, which we enjoy with God and with one another

through Jesus Christ—or, in other words, it is a means to the more complete realization of the Kingdom of God in our souls, and therefore in human society.

But the general conception of Church enterprise happily is widening in our day. We are beginning to realize that the mission of the Church is nothing less than the renewal of the soul of this race of ours—the establishment of the regnancy of the Christian ideal in all spheres of activity, and that this means building again the foundations on which our civilization may securely rest. Moreover, the conviction is forming within us, that we can best beget in society this new and better way of life by an enthusiastic extension of the fellowship of the community of Christ in the wider world.

If, as before suggested, this wider realization of the Kingdom will begin within the Church, in small groups of awakened people familiar with the Kingdom as the supreme conception of Christ and prepared, at whatever cost, to give themselves for its advancement, how will these eager souls begin their great adventure? It need hardly be

said that it is here taken for granted that the present spiritual activities of the Church would continue. The enterprise of the Kingdom would enlighten and strengthen the Christian message of redemption to individuals, and the work of saving the souls of men and of fashioning character, which we all deem to be supreme, would receive the inspiration of the vision of the City of God. All this and much more is quite obviously true. The aim of this chapter is rather to indicate the application of the Kingdom to the whole sphere of life, particularly to those areas which have not yet come beneath its sway, and are, indeed, questioned by many to be the proper sphere of its realization.

Let us turn, by way of illustration, to one of the most difficult though not the most important of these realms, namely, *Commerce*.

How would an intelligent revival of the Church's interest in the Kingdom of God affect commerce? How would these groups of ardent souls devoted to the Kingdom endeavour to cast the light of the City of God upon the realm of trade? Now it is true that modern commerce is not untouched by

Christianity. There are not a few who, with fine enthusiasm and conspicuous success, are striving to apply Christian ethics, as far as modern conditions render it reasonably possible, to business life. These good pathfinders fill us with hope, and one hastens to acknowledge with gratitude the progress they have made, and to appreciate the complexity and the difficulty of their task. But the general spirit of the commercial world is quite other than this. Commerce, as everyone knows, is built upon Competition. It is not organized selfishness from beginning to end, as some affirm, for the wheels of trade are set spinning often not for the sake of self, but for the sake of others ; but at heart its principles are certainly not the principles of Christian ethics. "Of course they are not," it will be impatiently replied, "and why should they be?" It is a mischievous thing to try to bring together two realms of life that get on very well apart. Religion belongs to the *spirit* of man, not to his trade. The laws of the spirit are supreme in their own realm ; they touch the world of competition here and there with kindness and restraint,

but *per se* they have no place in this area, which by common consent is a fair field for all and no favours. Competition necessarily is the soul of trade ; from it spring all the vast energies that drive the machinery of the world. Abolish it, and you have destroyed the dynamic of all economic effort. Let religion, therefore, keep to its proper sphere—the arena of the individual soul.

Here, then, we have a dualistic philosophy of life that is unsatisfactory as a philosophy, and deplorable when judged by its *results*. The outcome of this dualism is the present confusion and the open distress of the modern world ; it has issued in the present calamitous state of the social order with which no sane person is for a moment satisfied. Who can view without shame and indignation the gulfs of bitterness separating class from class and nation from nation, and who does not know that the world lies stricken before the face of our generation, because we have thus divorced two realms of human activity which ought never to have been separated ? If we are agreed that religion is not an appendage to life, but a spirit that should leaven the

whole of it, can we be content that it should not leaven that sphere of activity—the world of commerce—in which a man spends considerably more than half of his conscious hours? Bishop Temple says: “A great deal has been said in praise of competition, and most of it is rubbish. It is said, for example, that you must not interfere with natural processes; you must let the cream come to the top. But the scum comes to the top quite as much as the cream. It is sometimes said that if you want to get the best out of a man you must appeal to his own interest. That brings us to the crucial point. For if that is true, Christ was wrong. The whole Gospel rests upon the presupposition of the denial of that statement. If you want to get the best out of a man, you must appeal to his loyalty, his affection, his devotion, his perception of what his conduct involves for others whom he cares for or who care for him.”¹

In true words, such as these, the Christian challenge is thrown down before us. Those who are enamoured of competition declare

¹ “The Kingdom of God,” pp. 97–98.

that it alone can provide energy and incentive enough to turn the wheels of modern life; Christianity affirms that there is another force in life, which will furnish a greater dynamic, and that is a man's deep and steadfast interest in others for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Now the vital question is this: What can the Christian Church reasonably do at the present juncture to help to solve the problem of commerce and religion? Ought the Church to take a hand in the matter at all? Is commerce solely a question in Economics, or can Religion properly lend its aid? Surely if religion affects the spirit of man—the deepest part of him—it will profoundly affect all that he does, and its influence, therefore, cannot wholly be kept out of Economics. Is the utmost the Church ought to attempt in this matter, that of holding up a spiritual ideal—the ideal of the Kingdom—and allowing it to affect commercial ethics as best it can? Some would not feel free to go further than this; but this, if it were seriously and energetically done, would be a great contribution to the solution of the problem. If the

teaching of Jesus on wealth alone were powerfully preached, it would arouse the conscience of sensitive men. An ideal can be preached so as to be imperative, and the ideal of the Kingdom, if merely held steadfastly before the eyes of men, would be a beacon in the darkness. But the purpose of this chapter is to suggest that the Church should do something more than simply to hold up a spiritual ideal. Its responsibility does not end with the proclamation of a spiritual truth, however great it may be; it must exhibit that ideal in the life of the members of its own fellowship, and, therefore, it must go on to apply the principles of its ideal to its own beloved community. Accordingly, in this matter of the purification of commerce, the Church will set its ideal of the Kingdom before its members with such energy and persuasion that they will feel compelled to make application of its principles in their own lives, or allow their fellowship to suffer by their neglect. It is not for a moment suggested that the Church should presume to instruct men generally in the ways of commerce. This would be meddling

with industry ; and the Christian preacher is not called upon to be an economist. But the Church has vital ethics of its own—ethics of the Kingdom that are bound up with its view of human brotherhood and fellowship—and these must find active expression in its own community at least and, as far as it is reasonably possible, in the commerce of its members. An ideal as compelling as that of the City of God on earth must express itself, somehow, in the market place.

This, at least, could be done by the Church. There could surely be found in the membership of any large metropolitan church at least a few capable men of larger mould, who know commerce and its ethics thoroughly, and who have a genuine enthusiasm for the Kingdom of God. These men, as members of the community of Christ, could meet together in council from time to time to see how the Christian ethic might be brought to bear more potently upon their own economic sphere. It might appear at first that little could reasonably be done ; but a beginning would have been made, and the light of the greatest idea in the New Testament would

have begun to shine, at any rate, on one area needing illumination. This could not be regarded in any sense as the Church officially interfering with commerce. It would simply be the seed of the Kingdom dropped quietly into a little plot prepared for it in the vast area of the economic world. What harvests might not lie in that golden seed ! This quiet beginning—this *organization*, if you will (although the word seems to bristle with commercialism itself), would be the commencement of something more far-reaching and effective than official pronouncements by Conferences and Assemblies on the economic question ; for these generally provoke the retort that the Church itself does not carry them out. Such a council of kindred souls within the inner circle of a church, if it were composed of those who have true economic insight and adequate ideas on the supremacy of the Kingdom of God, would be full of promise.

No one, of course, expects that relentless competition can be driven out in a day, but one may at least expect that the introduction of a new factor, supplied by the spirit of man

and deeply affecting his attitude to his fellows, will in time modify it, and will, sooner or later, set free a world of pent-up human feeling in the realm of business.

Bishop Temple, discussing this question of Christian commerce within the larger question of the Kingdom and the world, expresses the opinion that a Christian business man must *compromise* with the commercial world as he finds it.¹ We may not like this word ; but it is difficult to see how we can avoid such a conclusion. He, of course, does not mean that a compromise must be made with the baser elements of the commercial world, but with the established order of its competition. This is undoubtedly so, for it is manifestly impossible to conduct a business without competition in the present commercial regime. Even the large co-operative establishments, which have largely abolished competition within their own borders, compete with the outside world. Those in the inner circle of the Church, then, who are ambitious to see the emancipating influence of Christianity in the market place, must reckon with an

¹ " The Kingdom of God," pp. 85-96.

established order within which they are forced to live, whether they like it or not ; but the point is this : they need not be *imprisoned* within this order, but are free to introduce into it a new spirit, which in course of time may transform it. It may seem to be a paradox, but it is a fact, that they cannot hope to change this order unless they live within it ; but their presence there, will be a protest against its wrong, and a standing argument in favour of the new way of life, which they seek to introduce.

The presence of such people within the commercial realm would help to set free certain luminous ideas which ultimately would begin to shine through the whole fabric of competition, disclosing a nobler structure rising within it. Such ideas as the following would be liberated : That life from the highest point of view is service, and that service is of God ; therefore all honourable callings find their place in the Kingdom of God. Accordingly, the man who sees in his business nothing more than a *quid pro quo* may view it more worthily as a form of service to the world. Another idea that these emissaries

of the Kingdom would help to propagate would be that the Common Good lies not in *things*, however substantial and alluring, but in the spirit of a people—in that soul of man, to lose which, as it was once said long ago, and to gain the whole world, would be unprofitable.

The result of this incidence of the Kingdom on commerce would be to encourage co-operation of the worthiest kind. Co-operation has many meanings economically ; there is a co-operation which is favoured, simply because it is deemed to issue in a more equal distribution of wealth—its basis is materialistic. But the co-operation, which would emerge under the spell of the City of God, would be that which would express the fundamental idea of the service of our fellows and its high privilege.

Some, doubtless, hold that the world is not yet ripe for these changes. But a very promising beginning has been made here and there in this day of grace, whether it is ripe for it or not ! It will appear to those who habitually look at life in the light of the City of God that this world is ripe for a better

régime, wherever there are a few strong hands and eager souls bent on establishing it. It is characteristic of the prophet or the reformer that, in his clear moments, he sees the world as a white harvest bending to the sickle which he holds. Lesser souls may wait till the day seems favourable ; but it is always favourable to him whose spirit hears the call from afar. Therefore, those lighted with the vision of the Realm of God will see the economic world, notwithstanding the clash of all its forces and the harshness of all its greed, as an area on which the City of God may now begin to rise, in all the beauty of its fair design and the glory of its citizenship.

“ The demand that is made on you,” said Mr. Kenneth MacLennan at a recent memorable Conference, “ is to get at the facts for yourselves, to grasp Christian principles clearly, to apply them fearlessly and to refuse the cynical answer that business is business . . . Such a task should thrill us through and through, and make us rise into new fulness of life.” ¹

There is another difficult and perplexing

¹ “ Christ and Human Need,” p. 60.

problem closely related to the Kingdom of God—the problem of all the dark and bitter evils that are bound up in the environment of Poverty. What, for instance, would be the message of the Kingdom of God to the underworld of London or New York?

Happily, the number of people who regard these areas of squalor and misery as inevitable seems to be decreasing. Those who have no more imagination than to use the words of Christ, “The poor ye have always with you,” as an indication of the permanence of poverty in the world, and those who are little better in saying that, in the sifting of human life some will always fall to the lower levels because their nature and habits seem to prefer them, are, if not a dwindling number, certainly a waning force in the earth. The submerged masses are a growing burden on the conscience of the modern world.

What, then, is the present attitude of the Christian Church to these areas of poverty and vice? It is realizing very keenly the heavy burden of their problem, but is manifestly perplexed about the solution of it. It does not ease its soul with the reflection

that the Christian life can develop richly even in the midst of poverty, or that the soul of man can rise superior to wretched and tragic surroundings. It is fairly wide-awake to the necessity of cleaning up these open sores of our civilization; but, while it has some kind of philosophy on the matter, it seems to have no adequate programme of action.

Notwithstanding the indifference of large sections of its membership, the Church is exhibiting in the wonderful devotion and self-renunciation of its elect souls, who give their life to the service of those drawing out their days in the deep shadow of the city's under-world, a spirit that could, in the end, well-nigh solve the problem. But it is doing this more or less sporadically ; it is not doing it consciously as part of a great venture, behind which is the force of its whole mind and will. One has nothing but admiration for those who go into the slums of our cities to help through to virtue and salvation hapless folk, in the rack and ruin of tragic surroundings. But such people of good-will must often feel the terrible depression of the

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heavy, sinister background, against which they win their victory, but upon which they seem to make little or no impression. It must often seem to such valiant souls that the problem of poverty and vice *as a whole* is scarcely touched. What, therefore, is the impact of the Kingdom of God on these questions?

The vision of the Kingdom would incline the Church not to set its hand lightly to this matter, but to marshal its united forces against this crime and folly of the race. The Church would by no means imagine that its duty was simply to *relieve* cases of poverty here and there, while the fell *causes* of poverty thrive and mock at its charity from their cavernous depths; it would not think that its mission was simply to save souls here and there, while the desperate environment, out of which it might lift them into its high fellowship, remains to ruin and embitter the lives of others. It would launch the strength of the Christian religion against the causes of Poverty.

Then, how would it begin? A commencement could be made immediately within the

Church's inner circle. Within every church, situated near these domains of misery, there are probably a few who are especially prone to hear the cry of the poor, and to look with kindling indignation on all that oppresses them. These good souls, if they have adequate ideas on the Kingdom of God and a real enthusiasm for its fellowship, might be willing, for the Kingdom's sake and as their contribution to life, to make a hearty attempt to realize and extend its fellowship in the areas of poverty. This would probably mean that they would go and live in these places, not in any sense with the demeanour of superior people conscious of doing some good in the world, but simply on the principle that one cannot help people adequately unless one shares their life and knows their point of view. It is scarcely fitting to say that this would be their *sacrifice*; for they would not so regard it. No man in his senses particularly desires to live in the slums, and only the morbid would take up their abode there simply for the sake of making a sacrifice. But it is highly probable that there are not a few who would cheerfully do this for the

sake of the Kingdom of God, because it is the best and quickest way, from the Christian point of view, of dealing with the wretchedness and the vice nearest to them. Such good folk would find life in these places exhilarating, because there would be in it the thrill of a high enterprise, and because they would, undoubtedly, see the fellowship of the Kingdom growing in beauty and in strength in unpromising places. Just as a true missionary in the heart of Africa finds a greater banquet for his soul there than in the crowded metropolis, so these elect souls would find a realm of God in the East End of London.

It will doubtless be said with a smile that this is a very optimistic view of life, rather too cheerful to be true. Such a criticism, one ventures to think, would proceed from an under-valuation of the attractiveness of the ideal of the Kingdom, and from a failure to appreciate the strength of the appeal of the Christian religion. But it will be replied that the people who are now doing this are few and far between. This may be so ; and it is so largely for the reason that the Church has not heartily enough called upon men to

do this, and has not shown them clearly the reason *why* they should do it. Many a man rightly hesitates to give charity to the needy, because it seems to him to be a mere drop in a bucket, and, further, because he is fully aware that it is no contribution towards a solution of the problem of their distress ; but, if he could be shown how he could reasonably spend, not simply his substance, but his life, in their emancipation, the thing would appeal to his mind.

These advocates of the Kingdom in squalid parts would be there, because they chose to be there for the sake of the higher issues of life. They would not have the rather disturbing consciousness that they came for an hour or two out of comfort into a realm of privation, to return again into congenial surroundings ; they would not feel that they were simply preaching to the people ; but, with the best of motives, they would be making a quiet but a very real attempt to enter into the life of the less fortunate, and to share with them the high fellowship of the Kingdom of God ; and they would, of course, do this as their service within the Christian

Church—in a word, they would do it for Christ's sake.

This attempt to help to solve the problem from within, based upon the spirit of its worthiest souls, would not be the Church's only contribution, for it would in other ways strike at the *causes* of want and misery. It would be openly hostile to any relentless competition bearing hardly on the poor; it would faithfully denounce the respectable sins of selfishness and greed; it would create in its own community such a keen social consciousness that its members could no more exploit a rising market, and thus make food dearer for the poor, than they could own squalid tenements unfit for human habitation. Above all, its supreme religious ideal of a fellowship, in which a man's intrinsic, spiritual worth, and not gold, is the thing to be sought first, would enlighten and inspire all efforts directed to remove the causes of poverty.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REALIZATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH—*continued*

VIEWED against the background of our imperilled modern civilization, the Kingdom of God is by no means an unrealizable ideal ; it is, on the contrary, the most adequate and reasonable spiritual ideal that has yet been set forth. The present state of the world emphasizes this. It has been said so often, recently, that modern civilization is in peril of being swept away, that many are impatient of the commonplace, and consequently unmoved by it. Nevertheless the grim fact remains. It is not only another war of unimaginable horror that we have to fear ; it is something closer to our doors than this ; it is something that is with us *now*—the peril of moral deterioration ; it is the lurking peril that, in the midst of all his notable progress, the modern man, though he may

know vastly more about the universe, may yet be less worthy to live in it.

We may not agree with Dean Inge in his disquieting view that the race is degenerating physically. In an arresting article on "Eugenics"¹ he states the opinion of Professor Karl Pearson: "Our output of first-class ability is decidedly less than it was a hundred years ago," and proceeds to say, "From the time when man began to be civilized he has progressed no further. His brain is no larger than it was ten thousand years ago; his natural weapons have atrophied; civilized man is an inferior animal to the finest of the surviving barbarian tribes. . . . In the absence of any systematic race-culture, we shall gradually slide back into feeble and helpless creatures, the destined prey of some more vigorous stock."

We may reject and even resent these views on the physical decline of the race, but we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that our civilization is in acute peril of a moral collapse. If the race is stricken with another

¹ "Edinburgh Review" for July, 1922, reprinted in *Outspoken Essays* (Second Series).

war which shatters our civilization, it will be the supreme moral failure of the modern centuries, and our name will go down disgraced to posterity. What shall we say of a civilization that builds the fabric of the world slowly, beautifully and at untold sacrifice—a civilization that in the course of the years, gathers the treasures of the ages into its great cities, but has not yet cast out of its bosom the fell spirit that in three or four hours, with the aid of some new, infamous poison gas, would make them a silent desolation? We may, and of course do, repudiate this spirit; but it is there grimly before us as a factor in the moral life of our age, and there is little hope of real progress until it is laid low in the soul of the race.

We are reminded in many ways that the task of the Christian Church is to lay the foundations of a better civilization. Its business is to bring to its birth in the modern world a new spirit, in which alone there is real hope for the future. "Yes," it will be retorted, "such generalities we hear *ad nauseam*, but how is it all to be done?" The ideal of the Kingdom of God furnishes the

answer. Such an ideal is reasonable and practicable at least for the following reasons:—

(1) This ideal bears directly upon the very heart of human life. It begins at the centre which is the source of all the movements of the world—in other words, its first appeal is to the spirit of man. Any great world ideal which aims at the rehabilitation of society must, of course, begin here, for here are all the springs of life. Let these springs in the secret places of the soul be purified, and the broad rivers of the world will begin to flow clear and deep.

Take any shining objective—Peace, for instance. There are some — Edison, for example—who believe that lasting peace will be realized when war becomes so utterly terrible as to be suicidal. The way to end war, in their opinion, is to increase its power of devastation so tremendously that men will at last see that it simply means wholesale annihilation, and is therefore impossible. On this ground we would not give it up for ethical reasons, but through sheer force of circumstances. What kind of an ideal is this to hold before the world? Are we to

get rid of this abiding horror only when we are driven by it willy nilly into a *cul-de-sac*, or are we on higher grounds to *choose* to have done with it? The greatest contribution that can be made to the solution of this terrible problem will be made by anyone or anything that is potent enough to set the spirit of the race irrevocably against it. Negotiations, Conferences, etc., have done much and will do more, but what we need is some compelling spiritual ideal that will so operate upon the soul of the race as to produce a tremendous revulsion of feeling against this evil. The solution lies in the human spirit. The reaction against this huge evil must begin there. Have we not in the Kingdom of God an ideal which, better than any other, could produce this revulsion of feeling? The City of God on earth, into which the treasures of the nations are to be brought, would at length, if adequately presented to men, captivate the human spirit, and would thus react centrally and powerfully against the idea of war.

The impact of the idea of the Kingdom upon the human spirit is particularly note-

worthy just now, because it combines in a remarkable degree two factors of acknowledged importance, viz., a strong appeal to the individual soul, and an equally effective appeal to the social conscience. It is a charge frequently brought against religion in these days, that it is keenly conscious of its gospel to the individual, but uncertain of its gospel to the race. These two fundamental factors, however, are happily united in the ideal of the Kingdom ; for when it comes to a man it lays hold first of the citadel of his soul and sets up there a reign of God, but it goes on, without hesitation, to widen this in the fellowship of the society composed of all those in whose souls the banners of the Eternal are spread. It is impossible to separate these two fundamental elements in the idea of the Kingdom ; they are complementary. It is its combination of the individual and the social factors that makes the spiritual appeal of this ideal so strong. Its primary significance, as the life of God sovereign in a man's deepest being, prevents it from being understood as mere social reconstruction ; and its significance as the

City of God in the midst of men forbids it being interpreted narrowly as individual salvation alone.

Therefore at the present juncture in the world's history, when there is a reaction against a too strict individualism, and, at the same time, a growing distrust of social programmes claiming to be the panacea of human ills, the ideal of the Kingdom of God ought to be particularly welcome, as it refuses to separate the individual soul from the social setting in which its fullest life is to be found.

(2) The ideal of the Kingdom is further to be commended because it is broad and comprehensive enough to be linked with human progress in every direction. No discovery in any fascinating realm, no fuller light upon any of our problems, no greater *renaissance* of the days to come, need be foreign to it. It takes all these things for its province.

The extraordinary scientific progress of our era is too well known to call for any comment ; everywhere there are signs that it has aroused and excited the spirit of the race, and that

we are beginning to realize that we have touched only the fringe of great realms of silent power awaiting our conquest. It is, then, quite clear that the religion of the future must in no sense set itself against this progress, but must seek to bring it all beneath the light of a spacious, spiritual ideal. Historical Christianity has, unhappily, often resisted progress ; but we now acknowledge that this was due to prejudice and blindness, and to a lamentable failure to rise to the full height of the central conceptions of our faith. These days are far behind us now, and the well-meaning protagonists, who would still shut Christianity up to a kind of geocentric view of the cosmos, are a rapidly dwindling number.

How is all this onward sweep of the world to be touched with the power of religion ? How can we link it up with Christianity particularly ? Is it not just here that the conception of the Kingdom of God, in its breadth and spirituality, will help us tremendously ? First of all it will help to remove a *practical* difficulty ; it will reduce a very real hindrance in the way of the service of many. There

are numbers of well-disposed people to-day, who in their silent souls reverence Christ and acknowledge the supremacy of His way of life, but stand aloof from organized Christianity because of what they believe to be the crude doctrine and the sentimental demeanour of many of its advocates. There is a type of Englishman, for example, who hardly ever mentions the name of Christ in company, not because he is insensitive to its charm, but because he has a perfect horror of those who fill their sanctimonious speech with it, without proper restraint. He is, in fact, so obsessed by the emotional demeanour of these people, that he immediately imagines anyone, who speaks of Christ at all freely, to be guilty of pious cant. We may, of course, smile at his hypersensitiveness and say that, if he were a bigger man, he would make short work of these artificial prejudices in his enthusiasm for Christianity as he is conscious of it in his soul. But, notwithstanding our just criticism, the fact is there that this type of man really thinks that Christianity is in the hands of the "Philistines," and he therefore stands apart. The point is this—these

sensitive people are for the most part quite keen about human progress whether material or ethical, and yet, for this quite inadequate reason, they refuse to give themselves to the religion which could make the spirit of man leap ahead in its onward path. They allow themselves to be held up by a presentation of Christianity, which they know does scant justice to its real magnitude and catholicity. Now the Kingdom—the City of the Eternal in the midst of time—the reign of God to the bounds of earth, would help to deliver Christianity from all narrow interpretations, and would set it before the modern world on so worthy a scale, that it would be acknowledged as the most far-reaching of our spiritual ideals. Thus the help of many hesitant and wistful people might be re-enlisted.

We boast of progress, but dare we go on without some such spiritual ideal as this? Progress, truly, but towards what goal? The fearful peril of material progress without ethical advancement flashes now and then upon us. The greatest continent of the world lies stricken before our eyes because we have sought the one, and neglected the other. We

are not to be judged by our scientific discoveries themselves, but by the way these discoveries react upon the soul that is within us. We have leapt ahead of our fathers in the discovery of potent chemical forces, but what if we leap back to barbarism by using them to blow our civilization to pieces ! Our day is crowned with the conquest of the air, but what if the modern aviator is a smaller soul than his ancestor, who journeyed leisurely over the face of the earth ! Progress, truly, but if it be all a matter of progress in *things*, if it does not deepen our personality and affect the purity of our spiritual aims, if it be not leading somehow to a better manner of life amongst us, what is the gain of it ? Now the Kingdom of God is an adequate ethical and spiritual ideal which will ensure such progress of man's soul as will be worthy to be set side by side with the swift, scientific advancement of the times.

We sometimes complain that the meaning of the phrase " Kingdom of God " is not *defined* in the Gospels. We may be thankful that it is not, that the broad outlines of it only are suggested, because each age can now

fill up these outlines with as rich a content as it pleases. The spiritual idea of it will be appropriate in any age, as it demands an attitude to God and to man which is the highest that our human nature seems able to attain. Can we imagine anything higher than the consolidation of the whole family of mankind, in all the rich variety of its callings, into a City of God on the round earth—the City, which is not bounded by the narrow limits of our planet, but is set up wherever there are creatures conscious of God throughout the wide universe? Could a worthier objective be set before any age, however advanced, than that of interpreting this ideal in its own way, and thus of realizing the City of the Eternal amongst men? Science will lend its aid. There will be no conflict between the religion that spreads the banners of the Kingdom in the soul, and the science that reveals the wonders of the life in the midst of which it is set. The more we know of the constitution of the cosmos, of the nebulæ or of the electron, the greater will our ambition be to bring all these discoveries into the realm of God, wide as the

stellar heavens. The Kingdom of God is so vast and wondrous that it will take all the investigators our human race can muster to bring to light its hidden treasure ; and the day is surely coming when they will be so fascinated with the unity of their task, that they will have neither time nor inclination to impugn each other's rights, or to wrangle about their differences.

The Kingdom, in fact, will grow in interest as the life of the race occupies new fields of investigation. Literature will expound its principles ; Art will set forth the grace of its spirit in beautiful symbols ; Science will explore its depths ; and the whole political and economic life of man will, in time, reflect the Divine ideal that is at the heart of it.

The ideal of the Kingdom will do more than simply be associated with progress ; it will control progress ; it will determine its direction, and it will do this because it will fashion and guide the spirit of man, which is the determining factor in all the great affairs of the human race. The world has seen the day when the disciples of Christ, through a misunderstanding of His spirit and message,

separated themselves from their fellows ; it will yet see the day when, through a discovery of His spirit, they will regard no area of human interest as foreign to them.

(3) The Kingdom of God, further, is a *practicable* ideal. This is so because it begins in the individual soul, and commences immediately to organize around that promising centre a society dominated by its own spirit. However far removed modern life generally may seem to be from the ideal of the Kingdom, a reasonable beginning towards its realization may be made by the Church here and now. This great matter of the world's renewal, indeed, is not so far above our powers that we need to wait for the advent of some inspired leader, or for the signs of a general spiritual awakening. In every church there are a few rare souls who hear the call of the Kingdom and the cry of the world. To them the way of life, which risks all on the love of God and men, is not strange and impracticable even in the modern world. This undying fire has been slowly burning in these ardent souls for many days, and it needs only the breath of a great

adventure to fan it to a flame. The demand of life on these awakened people is that they commit themselves entirely to the adventure of the Kingdom, risking all for its way of life and daring to cast upon the world, as it touches them, the light and glory of the ethics of Christ.

Has not a beginning already been made towards a wider realization of the Kingdom? Everywhere there are signs of a more adequate sense of Christian enterprise. We are acknowledging, with growing candour and penitence, that we have been too much absorbed in movements and policies for the "support" of the Church as a visible institution, and too little absorbed in the Church of Jesus Christ as the strongest support of a misguided and tottering world. But in this decisive day of ours many streams of influence are sweeping us away from the shallows of our religious selfishness, out to the open sea of humanity's needs. Our ideas upon the mission of the Church are widening tremendously; the conception of religious enterprise on a grand scale is being born again within us, and thus there is being revived

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one of the noblest features of the early Church.

In the life of the earliest Church in the former part of the Apostolic age, one thing stands out clearly, and that is the almost overwhelming sense of their enterprise that possessed the souls of its members. It was the pressure of this enterprise that created many of their religious services. They were doing so much, and in the face of so much peril, that they were forced to meet together to revive one another's souls. These gatherings were a central fire at which each rekindled the torch, with which he advanced on the darkness of the ancient world. These earliest Christian people seem to have had no desire to make their services popular; the public had to stand off, for it was a high privilege to enter that guarded fellowship. These early meetings existed to renew the strength of those who were using it up so prodigally in their heroic service of the Cross.

Now the rediscovery of the Kingdom of God, and its clear call from afar, is bringing again to its birth this inspiring sense of adventure in the modern Church. We still,

however, urgently need more of the *demeanour* of the earliest Church, which addressed itself to the world of its time as if it heard continually the clarion of God. One of the most deplorable features of our present Church life is our manifest anxiety to win popular approval. The numerous devices used to make public worship attractive, our eagerness to secure the support of large sections of the community, the disposition of many to plead with men to accept Christianity, ill befit the advocates of the greatest and most sublime cause in the earth. Better, indeed, the demeanour of the ancient prophet of the wilderness who, with his raiment of camel's hair and his burning soul, scorning the cities, strode out into the desert, knowing well that, for religion's sake, the people would follow him. A lofty conception of the Kingdom of God will tend to put an end to these servile ways, that were never worthy of religion—man's sublimest interest—and will rekindle in our souls the light of the greatest venture that we can make for God and man.

Let us, then, at the risk of the charge of Utopianism, endeavour to see what the

Christian Church would be like, if it became truly enlightened with the vision of the Kingdom. It would, in the first place, true to its origin, be essentially *spiritual*, recognizing as its Founder did that our supreme good and our eternal hope lie in the realm of the spirit of man. Therefore, while applying its ideal powerfully to the social and other spheres of life, it would be quite above all materialistic notions of the Common Good.

It would spend less time and energy in controversies about its own nature and history, and more time in fulfilling its real mission in the broad areas of the world ; it would prove its apostolical succession not by an appeal to history, but by a manifestation of apostolic enterprise in a stricken world ; it would be less engrossed in its ecclesiastical structure and system, and more occupied with the organization of that spiritual life of the Kingdom, of which its ecclesiastical structure is but the fabric ; and, further, its emphasis would be less on doctrine as an elaborate system, and more on that living experience of God in men,

which doctrine seeks to formulate and to express.

All this, of course, could richly exist in the midst of carefully ordered ecclesiastical ceremony, impressive ritual and stately temples, or where the still moments of worship seem to be able, without the aid of symbols, to allow the beauty of God to melt into the soul. The idea of a City of God amongst men here and now would fill the most elaborate or the plainest worship with diviner meaning.

What, then, would be the character of any individual Church, which heard in its deepest soul the call of the Kingdom? Its preaching would be, as it is now, the proclamation of the grace of God in Christ; but in that preaching there would be a larger place than there is at present for the application of Christian principles to definite spheres of human life. It would solemnly lay upon its members the duty of thus realizing the Kingdom in their several callings, and would make it clear that their enjoyment of its fellowship largely depended on their acceptance of this trust. It would have the courage to

believe that the life of Christ could not flourish in the soul that did not do His bidding in a sorely disordered and misguided world. It would not doubt the justification of its members by faith; but it would doubt the survival of their faith through long days of grievous neglect of Christian duty.

It will probably be objected, with some warmth and not a little scorn, that we have here nothing more than what is called in some quarters "The Institutional Church," with its various societies and social propaganda well known to most. If this idea be entertained, the foregoing argument must have been expressed obscurely. If by the Institutional Church is meant a centre of social service of the less fundamental kind, of the distribution of charity, of the organization of certain clubs, and of a popular propaganda against acknowledged evils, conducted largely on the platform, then the objective of these pages is certainly not to indicate such activities. A far more fundamental change in Church life and thought is here contemplated—a change so radical that the whole enterprise

of the Church would have a new and wider setting, and would come under the guidance of the greatest spiritual idea that we can entertain, namely, the Kingdom of God. It is not simply a revival of interest in social and other spheres that is indicated, but a rediscovery of the most attractive feature of early Christianity, namely, the spirit of the beloved community, which set before the world of its day not merely a new doctrine or philosophy, but a new life based upon a real love of God and a heart full of amazing good-will to men.

It is most important that we should not allow this wider spiritual work to become dissociated from the Church. The following passage of a well-known writer needs qualification. He says: "The wiser leaders of Christianity do not desire to monopolise the services of Christian men for the Churches, but rejoice in seeing the power of religion flow out in the service of justice and mercy. Religion is less an institution and more a diffused force than before. The brazen vessel of the Church was fatally cracked and broken by the Reformation, and its contents

have ever since been leaking away into secular life. The State, the schools, the charitable organizations, are now doing what the Church used to do.”¹ This may be true of the Church of yesterday, and partly true of the Church of to-day, but we may fervently hope that it will not be true of the Church of the greater to-morrow ; for this service of religion, flowing out in justice, mercy and charity to wider fields, is undoubtedly within the sphere of the Kingdom, and therefore of the Christian Church.

It may still be thought by many who entertain a lofty conception of the Church, that Church work does not strictly include that which has been suggested in the preceding pages. It may still be held that the duty of the Church is simply to present an ideal, and that it will come into undesirable conflict with many other interests, if it seeks to *apply* that ideal to the vocations of men.

In further reply to this view, which we have noticed before, and which we must regard highly, seeing that it is advocated by

¹ Rauschenbusch's "Christianity and the Social Crisis," pp. 206, 207.

many whose spirituality and insight are worthy of respect, it may be suggested that its tendency is to regard Christianity as a religion of illumination, and to overlook a most important element in the New Testament. Surely the task of the Church is much more than to present an ideal. Christ "brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel"; but He did not simply appear in the rôle of a teacher of the way of life. He regarded His religion, not chiefly as a new teaching, but as a *new life*, which was begotten by the power of God in the souls of those who believed.

If this be so, the duty of the Church cannot end with the announcement of the Kingdom; for it was brought into existence not only to preach the Christian ideal, but to *realize* it amongst men. Therefore, the Church must follow up this preaching by the application of the reign of God to the life of its own community. The mission of the Church is to influence the world *through its own society*; it must accordingly see that the life for which it stands is first realized in its own members, before it can adequately affect the world through them.

Moreover, this is quite in keeping with the most luminous definition of the Church that we possess—that is, the definition of St. Paul that the Church is the Body of Christ. We believe that the Being of God, with all its unmeasured compassion, became manifest in the person of Jesus Christ, and for two or three unforgettable years the life of God touched men through one marvellously gifted pair of hands, spoke through one voice, and shone in the teaching of one supreme mind. But the person of Jesus was, of course, localized in Palestine. The hands that healed the sick in the streets of Jerusalem could not, at the same time, be laid upon the sufferers of Capernaum. But this great ministry of God in Him would spread beyond Palestine and the confines of Judaism ; it would enrich the world not only through the magnetic touch of One, but through thousands of hands eager to do His bidding. Hence arises a Christian society—a community in which this new life of God is enshrined, and through the members of which the ministry of Jesus is carried on. The spirit of Christ, untouched by death,

takes to itself a new body—the Church, the whole society of the faithful, through whose ever-widening membership the Kingdom of God may spread amongst mankind. If, then, the Church be in very truth the Body of Christ, and if through its members the mind and the will of Jesus find active expression to-day, then its duty certainly does not end with the *proclamation* of an ideal, or, better still, of a gospel ; but it must, by the hands of all its members, weave the life for which that gospel stands into the whole fabric of human society and, by its deeds as well as its preaching, strengthen the realm of God in the world.

CHAPTER IX

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND DOCTRINE

IT is necessary that some reference, at any rate, should be made to the place of the Kingdom of God in the scheme of Christian thought, so that it may be exhibited in clearer perspective, and may help to remove certain misunderstandings that the foregoing pages may have caused.

The late Professor Orr, on more than one occasion, indicated that a certain peril lay in the rapidly progressing doctrine of the Kingdom of God—the peril of interpreting the whole of Christianity in the light of it. He gives expression to this in “The Christian View of God and the World,”¹ and also in his lengthy article on “The Kingdom of God” in Hastings’ “Dictionary of the Bible.” Now many may think that this danger has not been avoided in this book, that an undue

¹ p. 352ff.

emphasis has been laid on a conception which, however central it may be, is not the whole of Christian teaching.

The writer is quite conscious that the Kingdom of God does not, by any means, exhaust Christian doctrine ; he has therefore made no attempt to set it forth as a re-interpretation of Christian teaching *as a whole*, but has simply endeavoured to place a new and greater emphasis on a great Christian conception that has, until recently, been too much neglected in our thinking, and far too much disregarded in our life. It was said at the beginning (p. 13) that Christianity cannot be adequately construed in terms of any single conception, however comprehensive it may be ; but this may be added—that there is no other Christian idea which gathers into itself so much of the teaching of our religion, and is therefore so representative, as that of the Kingdom of God. Ritschl has already been quoted as having said that “ no higher than it can be conceived,” also A. B. Bruce, who without hesitation calls it “ an exhaustive category,” and Professor Adams Brown, who says that it is “ the all-

comprehending theological conception." Other names might be added—for instance, Wendt, by no means an extremist, who makes it the ruling conception of his two large volumes on "The Teaching of Jesus." Yet notwithstanding this, it is, of course, far from expressing the whole of Christian doctrine.

No man can reasonably hold that the doctrine of "Justification by Faith" is the whole of Christian teaching, yet the rediscovery of it by Luther, and the rehabilitation of Christian doctrine in the light of it not only led to a memorable religious revival, but permanently enriched the mind of the Christian Church. Is it, then, too much to expect that the rediscovery of the Kingdom of God in our time may lead also to the quickening of the Church's soul, and to a re-valuation and re-interpretation of some of its doctrinal ideas?

But to be more specific: it may still be thought, notwithstanding anything that has been said in a previous chapter (Chap. iii), that this strong emphasis on the Kingdom tends to turn the mind from the idea of

redemption, and that particularly does it seem to have little to do with the doctrine of *sin*.

This, I venture to think, is more apparent than real. A good deal has been said in our time on the over-emphasis of sin. This is doubtless intended as a protest against the elaborate academic discussion of it. But the very people, who complain loudly of this over-emphasis, are those who demand that we should keep our theology in closer touch with human life. If, then, we do this, we shall have a very definite doctrine of sin, for human life is full of it, and it is idle to say that it is not a burden on our conscience. Accordingly, if the doctrine of the Kingdom can be shown to have no particular bearing upon sin, it will be found seriously wanting.

But assuredly this is not so. It has been indicated in a previous chapter that the Kingdom of God is closely linked with the Atonement: it is therefore bound up with the Christian view of sin and deliverance from it. Probably, however, it will be thought, not that the Kingdom of God cannot co-exist with a theological doctrine of sin, but that practically, as a glowing spiritual cause in

the world, it will direct the attention of men to its enterprise rather than to their own need of forgiveness and redemption.

This, I believe, is quite erroneous. What, indeed, is it in life that awakens a sense of sin in men? It is not, primarily, our doctrine of it, but rather those high and noble things in life, which by their arresting contrast, throw the evil of our hearts into fearful and horrible relief before our eyes. It is the sublime things of life that bring us into immediate judgment, whether we consent or not, and expose the evil that lurks within us.

The Kingdom of God, then, as the sublimest venture of the human spirit, would do this, and men would not feel free to lend their aid to it and to enjoy its fellowship, unless their hands were clean.

Why does Christ so profoundly disturb the *conscience* of men? Why is it that, when face to face with Him, we become shamefully conscious of sinfulness? It is not chiefly because of His particular teaching on sin; it is because we suddenly find ourselves in the presence of something so great and so divine—something that stands in such living

contrast to what we really are, that all the meanness and the evil of our souls seems to have no refuge from the searching light of it. It is the purity of His life and the magnanimity of His love that reveal to us the narrow measures and the iniquity of our own soul. Have we not here part of the explanation of the fact that the Cross of Christ awakens in men such a sense of sin ?

If we endeavour to understand the psychology of this, we shall probably realize that it is not based on our philosophy of the Cross, but it arises, because the Cross is to us, in a supreme moment, at once the utter exposure of our sin and a revelation of the very heart of God, moving us at the foundations of our being. There are no real parallels to this in human life but the following may be taken for what it is worth. A man may commit some sin almost habitually without being dismayed at all by it, until one day he suddenly discovers, with a shudder, that it is the secret burden of his mother's life ; *that* ends it, if there be any soul in him at all, for that is the fatal exposure of it. This may be no adequate analogy, but does

not something like this lie in the influence of the Cross ?

Is not the Cross by its great silent offering, by the infinite patience of it, by its willingness to bear for our sakes the worst that we can do, the greatest exposure of human evil that our eyes have ever looked upon ? There everything that is noble within us seems to leap towards the love of Christ, and all that is evil stands naked and repulsive waiting to receive sentence at our own hands, as it has already received sentence at the hands of God.

Now there is nothing here that is foreign to the Kingdom of God ; for is the Kingdom not realized in that holy fellowship, which is ours by His broken body and shed blood ? The Kingdom, let it be repeated, is not simply social enterprise ; it is the rule of God in the community of the redeemed, and we enter that community through faith in Him who died, " for us men and for our salvation."

But further, the Kingdom of God in its aspect as a great spiritual enterprise in the earth, by no means turns the thought of men away from the necessity of Divine forgiveness.

On the contrary, it has a very distinct bearing on the *conscience* of men. As a sublime cause, reminding men of God and of the larger issues of life, of the high fellowship bound up with it, and of the lives laid down in its service, it would react upon the heart of a man, and would demand in all its advocates purity and integrity of soul.

The relation of the Kingdom of God to salvation has already been indicated in a former chapter. We have long since outgrown the earlier Hebrew conception of salvation, as deliverance from the outward evil that lies in the adversity of human life, and we are no longer satisfied that it is adequately expressed as deliverance from the evil that is within our souls. This is part of the New Testament conception of it, which constantly associates it with the forgiveness of sins, but it is not the whole of it; for we have also in the New Testament the greater idea of salvation as the finding of eternal life, which, of course, involves release from evil and much more.

Now the Kingdom of God is such a doctrine of deliverance for the individual; it is the

life of God powerfully entering his penitent soul, and assuring him of Divine forgiveness. Beyschlag says "The whole of Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of Heaven is a proclamation of grace, a doctrine of salvation";¹ and later "the Kingdom of Heaven is simply the opening of communication with the eternal love. No one acquires this love of himself, still less does he beget it within himself through mere need of love; it is bestowed upon him, it comes to him from heaven in order to raise him up to its own heaven of love."² Here the Kingdom is linked with the doctrine of grace that runs all through the New Testament; and we cannot insist too often, that it is not a realm of attractive service, which we elect to enter just when its ideal happens to find us in a congenial mood; it comes to us as a gift of God's grace, and when it comes it descends powerfully with the creative energy of God into our souls. When it thus comes upon a man it creates the crisis of his life. What do the words "except a man be born again he

¹ "New Testament Theology," E.T., Vol. I, p. 131.

² *Ibid.*, 136.

cannot see the Kingdom of God " mean, if they do not indicate that entrance to the Kingdom is so decisive a thing, as to be nothing less than re-birth into a new realm ? It is God coming to a man in His power, and this means the transformation of his nature—a new creation, to use the language of St Paul (*καινή κτίσις*).¹

The Kingdom is thus to be expressed as a doctrine of salvation, and is closely linked with the evangelical doctrines of assurance, that set forth this work of grace in human souls and the confidence that it brings to them of their possession of eternal life—doctrines which have received admirable emphasis in the evangelical theology and preaching of notable branches of the Christian Churches. Further, the Kingdom, as realized in the fellowship of its community, issues in the salvation of society.

It could thus be shown that, although the doctrine of the Kingdom is far from exhausting Christian teaching, many of the doctrines of our religion can be very profitably related to it ; but it may be doubted

¹ 2 Cor. v. 17.

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whether its special value for us to-day lies in its "doctrinal" significance. We are all familiar with the type of man who is very impatient of doctrine, who makes sport of the Creeds and has not historical imagination enough to see beyond what he is pleased to call the "wrangling" of those who made them. The hue and cry against doctrine in many quarters is not at all an admirable thing ; but, at the same time, we must respect another feeling on the part of many, who while appreciating the value of doctrine, are strongly of opinion that our strength at this juncture should be given to the expression of Christianity in terms of *life*. They hold that we should realize that it is more essentially a *life*, than a system of doctrine, and that while doctrine must be re-stated from time to time, the demand on us just now is that we should give to the world *in deeds* what we indubitably know to be true in Christianity. The spirit of it we know beyond doubt, the life it calls upon us to live we know, and it is for lack of this the world is stricken at this moment. Here, then, is the clear call of the times. Now the Kingdom of God

admirably meets this need. It presents Christian enterprise to us in a way that will have a very wide appeal. For instance, there are many to-day who have lost their way in the maze of the problems of modern life ; they look wistfully and reverently to the shining Figure of the Christ, but many of their cherished beliefs seem to have lost their soul. Is there any reason why they should not open their heart to the call of the Kingdom ? They probably have, more richly than they realize, that which Jesus required of men in His lifetime—that is a leaping of the heart to Him in trust and loyalty and in a clear committal of the soul to Him. In such an avowal of themselves, they would be pledged to the venture of the Kingdom of God in a world desperately in need of it.

The point is this—there are many in such a state of mind just now that they take up a new book on Christology or on the Atonement with scarcely any expectation ; but the Kingdom, as a realm of God in their souls and as a beloved community to be heartily realized in all the earth, might be the very breath of life to them. They might be quite

ready to plunge into this service of the Christ for the love of Him, and to allow the matter of doctrine to adjust itself later on. This is no disparagement of doctrine ; it is simply a recognition of a state of mind, that is too prevalent to be neglected, and in which there are many possibilities for good. " If any man will do His will," says Jesus, " he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."¹ Here, then, in the service of the Kingdom there is an ample opportunity to do the will of God.

What we most urgently need at the present moment is some presentation of the Christian religion, as an uplifting and realizable hope for the race. Mr. H. G. Wells declares that " the symbol of the Crucifixion is the drooping, pain-drenched figure of Christ," and that " a Christianity which shows for its daily symbol, Christ risen and trampling victorious on a broken Cross " would have a greater appeal in our time.² Mr. Wells does not see Christianity from within ; this reduces the value of a good deal that he says about it ; but

¹ John vii. 17.

² " God the Invisible King," pp. 121, 123.

his call to us here, to sound a blast that would ring round the hills of the world and in the souls of the youthful and the daring, is one that we might well heed. Christianity has been called the religion of Sorrow, it has also been called the religion of Hope. The latter is far the truer description. It is true that we have, in our anxiety to reveal the depth of His sacrifice and to touch men deeply in their souls, presented to them the Crucified "drenched with pain." This, doubtless, has often been done in morbid emotionalism, but whenever it has been done intelligently, it has been done against the background of the splendid vision of the more perfect Day of God.

Maeterlinck in a stimulating little book entitled "Death," complains that we associate with death mournful things, that do not rightly belong to it—for instance, with the pain and anxiety of the last sickness from which it really sets us free. Similarly we might complain that men cast upon the glorious form of Christianity the dark vesture and sable trappings of that which by no means belongs to it. We associate it with

sin and sorrow, with loss and death ; and we too lightly forget that it is responsible for none of these things. Had it never arisen in the world, men would have sinned and mourned and died. It is, in fact, that which, beyond everything else, casts the light of hope across these dark experiences of our human lot, and its business in the world is to cast sin to the four winds of heaven, to lighten sorrow, and to change the whole aspect of death, by making it the portal of a fuller life.

Now the Kingdom of God, without doubt, sets before us a triumphant Christianity. The City of God that is to rise on the earth is no small company of pious souls ; it is a great and growing community of God, which is to possess the world richly as a habitation, and is to see that the will of God is done on earth as it is done in heaven by that greater company, who enjoy, in larger measure, the same fellowship in the same community of the Eternal.

CHAPTER X

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND IMMORTALITY

THE Kingdom of God is inevitably bound up with the Christian doctrine of Immortality. It may be associated either with an other-worldly view of this, or with a view that connects it with the exhilaration of life here.

If we conceive the Kingdom Chiliastically, that is, if we associate it chiefly with the reign of God coming upon the clouds of heaven at the consummation of the age, we shall probably link it with an immortality far removed in its heavenly glory from this sinful earth ; but, if we regard it as a realm of God on earth, we shall associate it with an immortality that is simply the greater continuation of our life in God here.

The length of time that we are to live in a place usually affects our attitude to it. If we are to live in a town for a few days, we do not trouble to enter into its inner life ; if we

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are to live there permanently, we probably think it our privilege and duty to do this. Now we are living in a place called the earth, which is part of a much larger whole—the universe of God. Many think that we cannot see beyond the bounds of it ; it is their belief that we live here for a few uncertain years, and then come to a real end in death. But others, through the Christian faith, believe that our life here is in God, and is therefore part of a much larger whole—that it is the beginning of the life eternal. They accordingly think that our existence here is not adequately described by saying, that we are living on the earth for a few fleeting years ; we should rather say that we are now alive in the midst of the far-reaching universe of God, and shall be living somewhere in the vast domain of it for evermore. The conviction that this earth is part of a greater house of God, in which we shall always be conscious, and that the present time is a moment in eternity, will profoundly affect our attitude to the present world, and will lead us, not to despise it or even to hold it lightly, but to enter with zest, cheerfulness, and high

courage upon life as it presents itself to us day by day. This is the view that is encouraged by the conception of the Kingdom of God, which has been set forth in this book.

Astronomy to-day assures us that the universe is one; the spectrum discloses in the farthest stars, that can be analysed, the presence of substances which we find in our own earth. We, therefore, no longer despise the world as a "mere pilule of a planet," but think of its dignity in sharing the life of the whole cosmos. Similarly, Christianity assures us that the eternal realm of God is one; its life may burn here in human souls; its high fellowship may be enjoyed on earth, and is by no means to be bounded by the horizon of our passing day, or to be severed by the change that we call death. The City of God rises upon the earth; its eternal citizenship is already the possession of men by faith in God.

This life rose like a sun in the soul of Jesus, until it flooded all the region in which He lived and moved and had His being, and we therefore speak of Him as the Light of the world. St. John, in the opening verses of

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his first Epistle, casting his mind back to the dim beginning of all things and thinking of the life of God that had been at the heart of everything since that moment, says, "For the life was manifested and we have seen it"—seen it burning and shining in the soul of Jesus Christ.

Ian Maclaren reminds us that one evening we may see upon the artificial lake of an inland park, a great bird, the breadth of whose breast-bones and the expanse of whose wings speak of the ocean from which it has come, and the ocean to which it is bound. So, we may add, the presence of Christ in our world, with the sheen of immortality on His soul, speaks of those greater regions and that greater life from which He came, and into which He withdrew from us. He bore indeed amongst us the demeanour of one who had seen and known the glory of those larger surroundings, for He regarded death lightly, and He bore sorrow as one who knew that there was emancipation from it in the greater life of God. This demeanour of Jesus was essentially the mark of the citizenship of an eternal Kingdom of God, and this life, which

filled all His soul to overflowing, was the life of that same realm. Therefore when, through His power, it gushes up in our souls like an eternal spring, it is the assurance of our own immortality ; and so the Kingdom in our souls here becomes the earnest of the greater Kingdom yonder.

It is often the case that two stages may be distinguished in the progress of our belief in immortality. First, there is the time when we strive to convince ourselves by argument that it is true. These arguments, as everybody knows, are many and cumulative in their force. We call to mind the fact that men have always had the gleam of it more or less before them ; the burial customs of ancient peoples betray their dim ideas upon life's continuance ; our sense of activity, which death cuts off frequently in its fullness, seems to demand another sphere ; the unfulfilled promises of life point to the same conclusion ; our love of the unlimited and of all things that seem to defy the ravages of time strengthens it ; our fellowship with great souls calls for it ; the very brevity and uncertainty of life, which allows to God's

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noblest creation here a few short years of existence only, seem to assure us of it—and so on we may go through the acknowledged evidence. But we cannot help agreeing with the wisdom of Emerson's words that "the real evidence is too subtle, or is higher than we can write down in propositions," and that "the hungry eyes that run through it will close disappointed."¹

The second stage comes in those moments when we seem to see in a flash of intuition that immortality is true. In these great moments we feel the surge of God's life within us, and seem to know that we can never die. This deep assurance comes to us in various ways. It comes, perhaps, when a great soul whose friendship rehabilitated our world, slips away and fares forth into the great Beyond ; it comes in the midst of those great experiences that seem to leave the soul naked in the midst of the things of earth, and yet full of the vitality of God. These moments of intuition come to us especially when we find ourselves face to face with Jesus Christ. Emerson, who does not acknowledge

¹ (Essay on Immortality) "Essays," p. 654.

Christ's clear teaching on immortality, declares that Jesus was able to make men feel eternal.¹ Now this deep conviction of the certainty of our immortality comes to us when the life, which Christ begets in us, fills our soul. What is this life, if it be not the reign of God within us? What is it but the Kingdom of God set up in the heart of man? Have we not, then, in this experience, which is by no means rare, the Kingdom of God and the assurance of immortality bound up together?

This view of immortality, based upon the present reign of God in human souls, has at least the virtue of being associated with a healthy and hearty love of life in its highest forms here. It is connected with no disposition to leave the world, or to belittle it, but rather with a strong desire to "speak out and to act out" all that is within us—to use a phrase of Carlyle. We shall, for instance, think more of the great friendships of this present life if we believe that they are to continue beyond it; we shall look with greater wonder upon the mystery and beauty

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of nature if we believe we shall always be looking upon the work of God's hands in some wider realm; we shall the more heartily address ourselves to the business of life, if we really believe that in the midst of it we are helping to lay the foundations of an eternal City of God in human souls.

Probably the Chiliasts, who enjoy an other-worldly view of immortality, would make a somewhat similar claim—that is, they would probably hold that their view of immortality is also associated with a very real love of life, but not life as we see it here in this stricken, misguided world, but life as it would be in the perfect bliss of heaven. Yet with all their vision of the life ineffable, they cannot quite get away from the conditions of earth, for many of them interpret the Millennium in a most concrete fashion.

Surely, however, any love of life eternal that we have now must be based upon the real exhilaration of existence here. Our earthly life, darkened so much by the inhumanity and the sin of men, may turn the mind wistfully towards the perfect life, set in other surroundings and free from these

evils ; yet our longing for it is due to the fact that we have drawn the breath of life here, and have begun to taste on earth the luxury of existence.

Any view of immortality, I should think, which divorces it from our present life, ought to be discouraged. This, of course, does not mean that it will not transcend earthly conditions ; but it does mean that it must be linked to this life, if *personal* immortality is not to be a dream. One of the links is just this personality of ours and its past history. The character of our personality has been forged upon the anvil of this present world ; it has developed slowly, painfully and victoriously through all the shocks and the thrills of experience here ; and the history of all this is known to us, and to the few who have our confidence. This very real factor in our life here surely will be an initial factor in our life yonder—this, and at least some memory of its history. Here, then, is a link binding the two worlds, as far as the individual is concerned. If this consciousness of our own personality, and probably of its history, does not rise with us after death, there is no such

thing as personal immortality in an attractive sense ; for in that case we shall cease to be the beings that we are now, and life will have no conscious personal continuity.

One would lean strongly to the hope that the best qualities that have been wrought into our character here, in this realm of God on earth, will still be the possession of our soul on the morning of that fairer day, that lies just beyond the mists of death. I mean, for instance, that if one has the vision of a poet here, if life with all its adversity and all its inspiration has developed in him the power of discovering beauty here, he will rise with the desire and the power still to behold the beauty of a more wondrous creation, that will break upon his vision yonder. Surely Wordsworth, for example, who had such an eye for the beauty of common things, and such a soul for the simple and sublime expression of it, if he be now conscious in the wider universe, still is looking with wonder on that same great mystery of life that he once wrote about so sublimely in the "Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey."

The view of immortality, that links it to

the present life, finds justification in the New Testament, particularly in the mind of Jesus, who evidently thought not of this life here separated sharply from another life yonder, but of one great life of the spirit rising superior to death, and who said, "Because I live, ye shall live also";¹ and also in the mind of St. Paul, who declared that "if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."² What, indeed, is that but the immortal spirit, which we have known here, clothed with its resurrection vesture?

Let us not hesitate to connect in our thought earth with heaven and time with eternity. Let us not imagine that we are dimming the splendour of the Kingdom of God, which doubtless extends all through creation, by believing that it is set up on earth. "The earth is the Lord's," it is part of the shining universe; and we are His creation, who, notwithstanding our iniquity and our folly, have not quite erased His

¹ John xiv. 19.

² 2 Cor. v. 1.

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image from our souls. Let us not think that the lustre of our immortality suffers through its association with this present life ; for the present life of our souls, quickened by Christ, is eternal.

The late Stopford Brooke once said, " I believe that the day of my death will be the most romantic day of my life." This, undoubtedly, is the right point of view, for it is the language of one who goes into the presence of death with uplifted head, conscious that the life which he has already enjoyed will not be ended, but rather liberated, by that decisive experience, to be realised in greater measure hereafter.

This view, which associates the Kingdom of God closely with immortality, ought to set at rest the minds of those who imagine that the Kingdom has been secularized, by being brought into touch with the affairs of human life. True to its nature, the Kingdom elevates all that it touches ; it lifts the things of earth to its own level, and enables us to see the whole of life in the luminous setting of eternity.

As we approach the conclusion of our

study of this theme, may we not ask—Is not this great hope of a Kingdom of God, destined to transform the world, reasonable? Has life, indeed, any divine meaning for us unless we are able to hold some such ideal before ourselves?

Are we able at all to decipher the purpose of the Almighty in the world? We know little of the ways of God, and the final meaning of the world and of the vast universe, in which our lot is cast, is beyond the narrow measures of our mind; but we seem to be able to discern, in our clearer moments, the outlines of a design that may very well be ascribed to God. Here is the world before us; here is its history written in various ways before our eyes. What is the end for which it all exists? In the dim past, in the midst of the vast cosmos, the earth is formed—through what countless ages no man can say, for its primeval geologic ages fill us with wonder. In due time man appears to begin his long struggle with all the forces that are arrayed against him; he sets himself to conquer the forces of nature, he fights against disease, famines and pestilences, against the

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fury of the sea and of the wind, against the dark, moral evil lurking in his heart, against temptations which come thick and fast upon him. In the long struggle whole civilizations rise proudly and gloriously, only to succumb at length to inward decay or to some other desperate thing, that sweeps them off the face of the earth ; the centuries roll by and their habitation can scarcely be found. Thus the drama of earth goes on, the kingdoms rising and falling and the earth being melted, the race forging its way ahead to be set back again by its moral failures. What is the meaning of it all ? What is the end for which the world exists in the mind of God ?

One answer that our thinkers give is this : the world exists for the creation and development of human souls. The purpose of God, as far as we can make it out, seems to be to bring into existence the souls of men, and so to fashion them amidst the stern discipline of life that they will at length be able to know Him and to enjoy fellowship with Him throughout the ages. Therefore in all the rising and the falling of the nations, and in

all the reverses the race has sustained, this purpose has been achieved here and there in individual souls. Even though the nations may crumble into ruins, yet amidst all the decay individual souls may find God, and be fashioned in the beauty of His image.

This answer is doubtless very true ; we may find the Divine purpose focused in the spirit of a man ; but we cannot for a moment think that this is the *whole* of the answer to the great question before us. Has the Almighty no design *for the race* ? Is His purpose sufficiently expressed by saying that His objective is to save and develop individual souls within the race, without indicating His design for the whole society of men ? It is true that individuals may preserve their integrity and be conscious of their immortality amidst the rack and ruin of the society about them. But who can possibly be satisfied with this as an ideal for our human life ? Is the race to blunder along towards no particular goal, while individuals find salvation here and there within it, their character being fashioned by the shocks, the antagonisms and the heart-burnings, which

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a hostile and wicked world will not allow them to escape?

The irony of the whole situation is this : that whereas the rude shocks and stern discipline of life develop the nature of some, they play havoc with the souls of others. The depth of the problem of human suffering is just this—that while the fires of affliction leave one soul like refined gold, they leave another in blackened ruins. While society is blundering along in moral degeneration, some will win their way through to virtue and high fellowship with God, but others will go down recklessly and bitterly to the depths. The truth is simply this—that life's highest good can never be found in the realm of one's personal life, divorced in any sense from society, but in *both*. If society decays morally, hosts of unfortunate souls will decay with it.

Who of us can possibly be satisfied with the state of society to-day, and who does not feel the urgent need of a great ideal for the world? Are we on this earth, beneath the blue heaven of God, to go on in this old, intolerable way in which we have come, with many able to enjoy existence luxuriously,

while others eat their bread in privation and in bitterness of soul? Is the best we can conceive for the world a state of things in which most men have to spend three parts of their conscious life in getting enough to live upon, in which few have leisure enough for the deep enjoyment of the fruitful earth, and the high heaven, and the call of the vast cosmic regions beyond, and countless thousands, huddled together in the foul areas of great cities, scarcely ever breathe the fragrance of the earth, but rather an atmosphere which is pernicious both to their bodies and to their souls?

Does it not seem to all of us that, if there be a God at all who is interested in men, His will is that our human life here should become a deeper, quieter and serener existence, in which we should have time and inclination to think of the wonder and beauty and mystery of life, and of its high destiny, and in which the road that we travel should not be a jostling way, hot with the breath of striving men, but one that we take more calmly and confidently as it stretches before us into the clearer light of eternity?

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The great idea of the Kingdom of God reminds us that we are a *community of God*, and it not only lifts the souls of individuals to the life of God, but it lifts the earth and its whole society of men to the City of God, assuring us that not only here, but in realms beyond, life is a *fellowship* with God and with other souls.

Apart, then, from some such hope as this, has life any deep and abiding meaning for us? In the light of this fairer hope, how shall we regard the conduct of those whose chief anxiety and greatest effort seem to be to hold fast as much of earth's treasure as possible, who debase the great thing which we call life into a struggle for their pound of flesh?

It is this vision of a better world, of a Kingdom of God on earth, that makes all the sacrifices of men for it, not the fond kindness of dreamers, nor the morbid self-renunciation of the introspective, but the hearty, cheerful service of those who feel and know what a great thing life may become. The Christian merchant, for example, who gives up much to bring into the over-driven, panting

competition of his day a little more human feeling, a little more of the Christian ethic, is not a good-natured, kindly soul whose heart is bigger than his head, or one who is piously resigned to the principle that sacrifice is part of the cross of every man. He is, on the contrary, a true seer, who has some very real ideas about a better world and a realm of God, and who is prepared to give his service and his substance heartily to realize them.

Christ was not a morbid soul, who crept along amid the gathering shadows to a Cross of pain, on which He now pathetically displays His broken heart to the world. He was a great, strong Lover of life and of the open spaces of the world, who endured the Cross simply because there was no other way of bringing the Kingdom in power to the hearts of men; and we, to-day, if we sacrifice anything for the Kingdom, must do it in this strong and reasonable spirit.

Life rises to its greatest heights when men give themselves to some far-reaching cause of God, which develops slowly, and has its full result only in the days to come.

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To cast good seed into the field of the world, and to be content that those who come after us will reap the full harvest of our sowing, is a worthy thing to do. It is very human to espouse causes that lead to brilliant issues in a day ; but the greatest adventures of the human spirit do not so openly and immediately succeed. It takes larger vision and finer powers of soul to give one's strength throughout the days to these greater causes of the Eternal.

The dullest soul will respond to the tramp of an army that can be seen ; when the street rings with it all, and the crowd is thrilled by it all, he is easily moved to emotion. But it takes a finer ear and a more sensitive soul to hear the tramp of that invisible army, that countless, silent host of God pressing on through the centuries, and through all the raging battle of our life, to the perfect day. But without some vision of this greater company, without some enjoyment of their comradeship and fellowship and some share in their cause of imperishable righteousness, life is a poor thing.

The Kingdom of God on earth is such a

cause. It comes "not with observation"; it does not promise to renew the earth in a day; silently but deeply it enters into the souls of men; in a still moment when all the world is hushed, in the quiet atmosphere of a Church, beneath the silent mystery of the stars, in the presence of life's tragedy, and especially through one glance of the eyes of Christ, does this great, quenchless hope for the world begin to form itself within us. If we, then, give ourselves to it, it will cast upon the plains of earth and the cities of men the light of that greater eternity in the midst of which we draw, all too unconsciously, the breath of life.

It is the realm of God, wider than earth and more lasting than that which we call time, that makes it worth while living and striving for a better world; it is this same Kingdom of the Eternal that links our life here with our greater immortality.

To establish this Kingdom in our souls Christ died willingly; and to widen its bounds on earth all people of goodwill should deem no sacrifice too great to be cheerfully made, and no spiritual adventure too high to be beyond their awakened powers.

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